TERRA

THE NATURAL HISTORY
MUSEUM OF
LOS ANGELES COUNTY

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From The Director

Over the past 3,000 years nomadic peoples inhabited the Eurasian steppes from the northern shores of the Black Sea to the Altai region, Tuva, and Mongolia. From the early part of the first millennium B.C. the nomads practiced animal husbandry, devising forms of culture particularly suited to the conditions of their mobile way of life and the demands of their fragile economy. Saddle and stirrup originated among these peoples, and they developed clothing suited for a life spent in the saddle, an easily transportable home—the yurt, and distinctive food products based on mares' milk. Powerful nomadic kingdoms arose repeatedly from the earliest times into the Middle Ages to assume dominion over the known world, and the names of their dynamic leaders—Chingis-khan, Khubilai-khan, and Attila—are still synonymous with brilliance in military and administrative strategy. Less well known is the nomads' role in linking the developing civilizations of East and West and their lasting contributions to world culture in general.

This special issue of TERRA is published in conjunction with the presentation in 1989 of the first comprehensive exhibition on the Eurasian nomads to be organized for the United States. The exhibition, **Nomads: Masters of the Eurasian Steppe,** is a product of a collaboration between the Academy of Sciences of the U.S.S.R. and the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County. More than 1,2000 artifacts from eight major archaeological and ethnographic institutions of the Soviet Union will first be on exhibit in our museum in Los Angeles. The show is then traveling to the Denver Museum of Natural History and concludes its tour at the U.S. National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution, in Washington, D.C. Peter C. Keller, Associate Director for Public Programs at our museum, established the concept for the U.S. tour of the exhibit. Andrei P. Kapitsa, Deputy Secretary General of the U.S.S.R. Academy of Sciences, provided overall direction for the Soviet arrangements. The U.S. tour has been made possible through the efforts of John G. Welles, Director of the Denver Museum of Natural History, and Frank H. Talbot, Director of the U.S. National Museum of Natural History.

At the heart of the exhibition are archaeological and ethnographic materials from the collections of Peter the Great's Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography, the Leningrad division of the Institute of Ethnography of the U.S.S.R. Academy of Sciences. Other objects—many on public display for the first time—have been contributed by the Hermitage, Leningrad; the Archaeological Museum of the Institute of History, Archaeology, and Ethnography of the Kazakh Academy of Sciences, Alma-Ata; the Moscow Division of the Institute of Ethnography; the Institute of History, Philology, and Philosophy, Siberian Division of the U.S.S.R. Academy of Sciences, Novosibirsk; the State Museum of Ethnography, Leningrad; the State Museum of the Tuva A.S.S.R., Kyzyl; and the Museum of the History of Religion and Atheism, Leningrad. We are indebted to the directors of these Soviet institutions for making their priceless collections available to the exhibition; in particular we thank Karl M. Baipakov of the Kazakh Academy of Sciences, Rudolf F. Its of Peter the Great's Museum, and Boris Piotrovskii of the Hermitage for facilitating photography of artifacts from their institutions.

The exhibition reflects the most recent research of a group of distinguished Soviet ethnographers, historians, and archaeologists, headed by Vladimir N. Basilov of the Institute of Ethnography in Moscow. Dr. Basilov has worked tirelessly as curator of the exhibition and editor of the catalog, *Nomads of Eurasia,* to make the complex history of the nomads accessible to the American public. His vast knowledge of the cultures of the steppes is reflected in the drama and coherence of the exhibit and the painstaking scholarship of the book.

The Natural History Museum gratefully acknowledges generous support from Occidental Petroleum Corporation, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the California Council for the Humanities, and the Milken Family Foundation. The museum also extends appreciation to Omar Sharif, Max Baril, the University of Washington Press, Greneker/Wolf & Vine, and May Company California for significant gifts-in-kind. We are grateful for these generous gifts.

The Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County has found its collaboration with the U.S.S.R. Academy of Sciences to be extremely rewarding. The Nomads exhibition celebrates the wisdom, accomplishments, and endurance of an ancient people and provides exuberant testimony to the diversity of life in the vast Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

I thank everyone who contributed to the realization of this exciting project.

Craig C. Black
Director
Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County

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COVER: This bronze plaque of a coiled panther was created by a Scythian artist to decorate a horse harness in the eighth century B.C. The Scythians were an early group of Eurasian nomads who defeated the Persian king Darius in battle and whose lifeways were recorded by Greek and Roman historians. The plaque was discovered in Tuva, south Siberia, by Soviet archaeologists; it and other treasures of the Central Asian nomads are on display at the Natural History Museum from February 4 through April 16, 1989. Photograph by Dana Levy and Joel Sackett.

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NOMADS: FROM THE BLACK SEA TO THE GREAT WALL OF CHINA

by Vladimir N. Basilov

Translated by Mary F. Zirin

Over a period of nearly three thousand years (from the beginning of the first millennium B.C. into the twentieth century) the nomads of the Central Asian steppe inhabited vast territories from the northern shores of the Black Sea to the northern borders of China (see map page 7). Nomadism was a mobile way of life closely connected to economic circumstances, since it was the demands of the economic system that forced people to migrate from place to place. The nomads of the Eurasian steppe were mostly engaged in extensive livestock herding. When their animals had devoured all the forage in one pasture area, they were driven to feed in another.

Migratory herding was not humankind's most ancient occupation. As archaeological excavations have shown, it was preceded historically by a complex livestock-raising and agricultural economy, which was a relatively sedentary way of life. Why then did nomadism originate just at the beginning of the first millennium B.C.? After all, the population of the Eurasian steppes had had extensive experience with animal husbandry, and horses—the most important animal to the steppe nomads—had been domesticated by the third millennium B.C.

There were undoubtedly a variety of reasons that induced these peoples to change from a complex economy to a specialized one, but climactic changes were probably the most important reason for the development of herding as a way of life. The climate began getting more arid from the third millennium; a short period of increased moisture once again gave way to a new dry period between 1200 and 500 B.C. With the growing aridity of the climate came an increase in the steppe and semidesert territories that could be used effectively only as pasture for livestock. Nomadic husbandry originated when a change in natural conditions made it impossible to retain the earlier mixed economic forms.

Sedentary peoples saw the nomads as barbarians, as destroyers of culture. The nomadic herders created their own culture, however, which reflected the demands and possibilities of their way of life. Movable dwellings, clothing suitable for horseback, a wealth of felts and leather utensils—these accouterments of the nomadic lifestyle were noted long ago by ancient Greek and Roman writers.

Nonetheless, some features of nomadic culture were slow to evolve, and many traditions of the sedentary (or semisedentary) way of life persisted—for example, the nomads continued to produce ceramics and cumbersome metal utensils. The culture of the later nomads (from the first centuries A.D. on) became more adapted to the migratory way of life. While readily accepting many of the achievements of their sedentary neighbors, the nomads made an independent contribution to world culture. They improved horses' harnesses and promoted the widespread use of trousers and sabers. They introduced new milk products and popularized hunting with birds of prey. They also invented the bowed string musical instrument, a precurser to the modern violin.

Nomadic societies were always characterized by a strong social order based upon kinship. The individual was a part of the "clan" (a group of blood relatives), and the clan was a part of more distantly related communities that in turn constituted the tribe. This organization guaranteed a reliable defense against enemies. Behind the solitary group of a few families wandering the steppe stood an invisible, populous army of fellow tribesmen ready to carry their revenge to anyone who injured one of their own. Although livestock was the private property of individual owners, it was marked with a brand common to the entire clan or tribe. Tradition traced the origins of the tribe back to a single ancestor, and several tribes were frequently considered kindred, since they shared an ancestor. This belief in a common origin promoted political alliances.

The nomads' lives were regulated by customary law; over time traditions and customs changed, but at every epoch the steppe peoples recognized as virtues martial prowess, hospitality, respect for elders, love for children, and ready aid to kin. A funeral and a wake were considered important social obligations that ensured the dead person a good life in the next world; harsh retribution awaited those who dared to profane the grave of a kinsman. Friendships between men often developed into sworn brotherhood. The patriarchal character of the society, however, by no means excluded respect for women.

From ancient times the nomadic societies were divided into rich and poor, the aristocracy and the common people. Although immemorial

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Right: The Great Wall of China, much of which was built in the third century B.C., serves as a lasting memorial to the terror the nomad hordes inspired. Relations between the nomadic and settled worlds extended far beyond warfare, however. Steppe and oasis were connected by a peaceful, mutually profitable trade. In exchange for livestock, leather, and wool the herders received grain and handicraft products. Photograph © R. Ian Lloyd/West Light

Migratory herding was not humankind's most ancient occupation. Why, then, did nomadism originate at the beginning of the first millennium B.C.?

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Many nomadic peoples of Central Asia depended upon camels—strong, undemanding animals useful for carrying heavy loads, including the yurt, the nomads' portable felt dwelling. Photograph by Harold and Erica Van Pelt.

custom proclaimed communal right to the land, well-off herders often seized the best pastures for their personal use. The aristocracy did not necessarily possess any real power, but the entire political history of the nomads consists of the repeated rise of leaders capable of subordinating their fellow tribesmen, neighboring tribes, and even neighboring peoples.

The nomads, accustomed to harsh living conditions and taught from childhood to ride horseback and use weapons, were famed as fine warriors. Because of the strict discipline among the troops imposed by the nomadic rulers ("khans"), these warriors became a formidable military force.

The nomads brought frequent calamities to their sedentary neighbors. The Great Wall of China, much of which was built in the third century B.C., serves as a lasting memorial to the terror their hordes inspired. Relations between the nomadic and settled worlds extended far beyond warfare, however. Steppe and oasis were connected by a peaceful, mutually profitable trade. In exchange for livestock, leather, and wool the herders received grain and handicraft products. In some cases agricultural districts were simply part of the nomadic world; for example, Herodotus, writing in the fifth century B.C., speaks of Scythian cultivators. The nomadic steppe of Transoxiana—between the Amudar'ya and Syrdar'ya rivers—is an example of another sort: here a large stock-raising district was included in the economy of the oases.

Nomadic and sedentary peoples sometimes formed political alliances. For instance, from the eleventh to thirteenth centuries, Russian princes involved the steppe peoples in their internecine wars, using the armed might of the nomads one against the other. Political alliances were cemented by ties of marriage; for example, the mother of the renowned Russian prince and military leader Aleksandr Nevskii (c. 1220-63) was a Polovtsian woman, and in 1223 the Russians and Polovtsians fought together against a Mongol army (the Polovtsians were a Turkic people forced out of Eurasia by the Mongols and Tatars).

It is even more difficult to distinguish between nomadic and sedentary peoples in the history of Central Asia. The kingdoms that originated in the oases as a rule extended their power over their nomadic neighbors. When the nomads themselves conquered agricultural districts, they settled in the oases in large numbers, took up a sedentary or semisedentary life, and intermingled with the local population. From the earliest recorded times, wherever natural conditions permitted, the herders led a semisdentary life. This applies to the majority of Turkmens, Karakalpaks, Uzbek-Aralians, and the Kazakhs living in the Syrdar'ya basin. There were cases when some members of a Turkmenian family migrated with livestock while the others grew crops.

The last flowering of the nomadic way of life came in the Middle Ages, when powerful nomadic kingdoms arose—in particular, that of Chingis-khan. More recent times brought a decline in nomadism. By the end of the seventeenth century the Manchu rulers of the agrarian state of China had established their dominion over the nomad state of Mongolia. In 1731 considerable numbers of Kazakhs volun-

Climatic changes were probably the most important reason for the development of herding as a way of life.

Eurasian nomads in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Map by Martha Breen Bredemeyer.

tarily accepted Russian hegemony (see "Pages of Central Asian History" by Azade-Ayse Rorlich, this issue). In Central Asia the nomads were weakened by the constant predatory wars that the feudal kingdoms carried on among themselves. The nomads lost the large territories they needed for extensive herding. For instance, the annexation of the Crimea to Russian in 1783 put a virtual end to nomadism in the south Russian steppe. By the nineteenth century nomadism came to represent a historical anachronism both as an economic system and a way of life. Therefore, when there was a famine among the Kazakhs in the eary nineteenth century, the tsarist administration, besides furnishing foodstuffs, insisted that the nomads adapt to settled life.

The Nomads' Way of Life

Nomadism has had a marked seasonal character because the pastures on which the livestock could suitably live during the summer months in many cases were not suitable for winter—and vice versa. The direction of migration was different for different peoples, and it is evidently impossible to find any overall regularity for all nomads. For instance, William of Rubruck, a thirteenth-century French traveler, reported that: "[the Mongols] drive their cattle to graze on the pasture lands without water in winter when there is snow there, for the snow provides them with water." He also noted that: "in winter they come down to the warmer districts in the south, in summer they go up to the cooler ones in the north."

The migration routes were therefore determined by the presence of pastures suitable for livestock grazing. At different times of the year these pastures could be found in different spots. The migrations took many circumstances into account. In central and northern Mongolia, for example, the herders gathered for the sum-

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What Is the Steppe?

Virtually every continent save Antarctica contains vast tracts of land covered with short grass known as steppes. *The extensive Eurasian steppe—akin to the American prairie, the South American pampa, and the African savanna—stretches in a long, relatively narrow band that becomes forest in the north and desert in the south.* Steppe *derives from an Old Russian word meaning "lowland," and in Central Asia the steppes contrast markedly with the tall mountain ranges that border them to the south.*

It is these high mountains that help create the climate that characterizes the steppe, for they block warm moist air moving north from the Indian Ocean. In contrast, there is nothing to block frigid air blowing from the Arctic; the European subcontinent shields the long plains from moderating influences of the Atlantic Ocean. The land is very hot and dry in the summer and very cold and dry in the winter. The wind blows almost constantly, just as it does over the United States' Great Plains; the steppe's short grasses offer no cover. Rainfall varies considerably from year to year, but averages 8 to 12 inches (200 to 300 mm), mostly in the spring. There is little snow, even in the mountains, although glaciers persist, particularly in the Pamir mountain range (which boasts Pik Kommunisma, the Soviet Union's highest mountain).

The plants and animals of this forbidding land are nonetheless greatly varied. Most evident are the drought-resistant perennial grasses, such as feather grasses, oat grasses, and sedges. There are practically no ephemeral plants, unlike our southwestern deserts, but rather plants that survive by long-term vegetative reproduction, for example, sagebrushes.

The most typical steppe animals are rodents, including the steppe marmot and the common hamster, a large relative of the popular pet golden hamster. Larger mammals, such as the Asian wild ass or kulan and the goitered gazelle thrive in areas where they are protected. Not abundant are such wild cats as the caracal lynx, Pallas cat, and the Asiatic race of the cheetah.

Although crop agriculture is expanding in the steppe, the southern Central Asian reaches are still most hospitable to grazing, the Eurasian nomads' traditional way of life. Sheep are more numerous than goats or cattle: they subsist on poor pastures, need little water, and travel great distance with a minimum of discomfort. Photograph courtesy of TASS.

Horfield's tortoise inhabits the desert areas as do many lizards and snakes. There are a large variety of insects, including many species of grasshoppers, ants, flies, weevils, tiger beetles, and ground beetles.

The bird population of the Central Asian steppe is particularly interesting, although the harsh climate makes it necessary for many of the birds to migrate in the winter. Many species of larks are common in the steppe, and they are often seen perched on sturdy stems of grass just above the ground. Birds of prey include the Golden Eagle, popularly used as a hunting bird by the Central Asian nomads, and the Lammergeier, a large vulture with a wingspan of up to eight feet.

The established habits of migration could change rapidly when war or the threat of war forced the herders to leave their usual dwelling places.

While readily accepting many of the achievements of their sedentary neighbors, the nomads made an independent contribution to world culture. They improved horses' harnesses and promoted the widespread use of trousers and sabers. They introduced new milk products and popularized hunting with birds of prey. They also invented bowed string musical instruments, precursors to the modern violin. (Left) An early twentieth-century hood for a bird of prey fashioned by the Uzbeks. (Right) A khuur, *a two-stringed bowed instrument that was widely used among the Mongols. This example comes from the early twentieth century and is made of wood, leather, metal, and horsehair. Photographs by Dana Levy and Joel Sackett.*

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mer around rivers and lakes. But in southwest Turkmenia the herders abandoned the banks of the Atrek River in the summer to avoid the gadflies and mosquitos. Karakalpak herders brought their herds to the banks of the Amudar'ya River and the Aral Sea only in autumn: the summers there were too damp for sheep.

The availability of pasture also affected the distances the nomads traveled. In the the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries some groups of Kazakhs migrated over distances of 1,000 to 1,500 kilometers (620 to 930 miles). For the Turkmens in the nineteenth century the distances between seasonal pastures were rarely greater than 20 to 25 kilometers (12.5 to 15.5 miles), and the range of the Altaians' migrations rarely exceeded 10 kilometers (six miles). Some scholars believe that there was no true migration in the Altai, since there was sufficient forage everywhere.

How often the herders moved from place to place during a single season also depended on the condition of the pastures. Many nomads stayed in the same place all winter, but this was far from being a general rule. Nineteenth-century Mongols, for instance, migrated even in winter, although less frequently and over shorter distances than during the summer. The Altaians and Tuvinians also often moved about during the winter, traveling only a few kilometers away from the old spot.

Natural conditions also influenced the composition of the herd. The favorite animals of the nomads of the Eurasian steppes were sheep, horses, and camels, all of which could easily withstand long migrations. Sheep and goats were found everywhere, although the latter were less abundant. Raising horses in herds proved possible only in limited areas. For instance, although the Turkmens were famous for raising excellent riding horses (the Akhal-teke breed), they did not keep them in herds; only sheep, goats, and camels could feed on their desert pastures. The breeding of camels—strong, undemanding animals useful for carrying heavy loads—also varied with the economy of different groups of herders. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, camel-raising, along with sheep-raising, was a leading sector of the Turkmenian economy and was important for the Kazakhs, particularly those who inhabited the southern part of the Kazakh steppes. In contast, according to the 1931 census, barely more than 1 percent of Tuvinian herders owned camels.

Cattle also played a substantial role in the life of the nomads. Over 2,000 years ago the Scythians had harnessed oxen to pull their wagons. However, cattle could be raised only in areas with sufficient grass and water. The nomadic Turkmenian herders did not keep cows at all,

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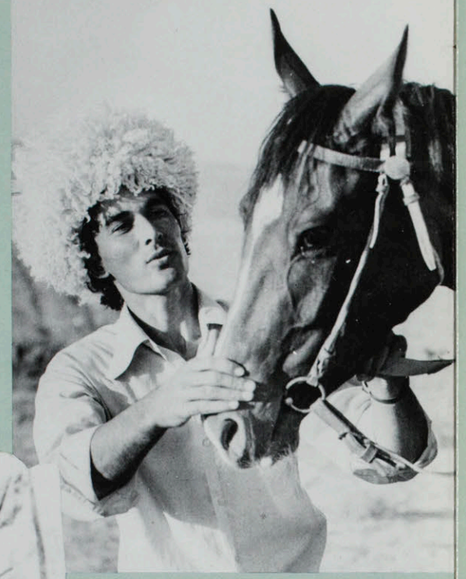
Faces of the Nomads

A Teleut woman shaman, from a photograph taken in the 1930s.



A Turkmen man at a horse farm in Ashkhabad, 1970s. TASS

A Buryat woman, 1905.

A Kazakh bride.

A Tuvinian couple, 1926–27.

A Yakut girl with kumys (fermented mare's milk) serving vessels, 1912. State Museum of Ethnography, Leningrad.

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While nomadic animal husbandry is no longer a way of life in the Soviet Union, the nomads' cultural identity is stoutly maintained. This cinema in the modern city of Frunze in the Kirghiz Soviet Socialist Republic is designed in the shape of a yurt. Photograph courtesy of TASS.

and the Kazakhs kept few cows, except in certain regions where pastures were ample for cattle-raising. From 1931 census data, however, we find that the Tuvinians had more cattle than horses. The Mongols raised cattle both in medieval and modern times, although the proportion varied from place to place. Yaks were raised from ancient times in a number of regions of Tuva, the Altai, Kirghizia, and Mongolia.

Each major tribe or group of tribes had its region of habitation, well known to its neighbors, within which its migrations took place. Among the thirteenth-century Mongols, Rubruck reported, "every captain knows... the limits of his pasturage and where to feed his flocks winter, summer, spring, and autumn." The clans and tribes of the nineteenth-century Kirghiz migrated within a fixed territory. Of course, the herders frequently used others' territory, but only with the agreement of its proprietors. Usually all groups agreed on the habitual routes of migration. Who was migrating where in the steppe was well known. The tribes also knew that it was judicious not to encroach on pastures to which a strong and rich clan had laid claim.

The stable ties of the herders to the pastures they had made their own is clearly shown by the example of the Turkmens. In the desert the Turkmens dug wells to water their livestock, and the wells belonged to those who dug them. It was natural that the owners of a well in fact also used nearby pastures, although they were considered the property of an entire tribe (a group of clans). Theoretically any kinsman or even an outsider could drive his animals onto that land, but how could he water his livestock if well water was often barely sufficient for its owners?

The duration of the nomads' settlements depended on assuring forage for their livestock. Among many peoples—for example, the Kirghiz—the most numerous were the winter settlements, which as a rule remained in one place all winter; it is no accident that in Uzbek and some other languages the ancient word meaning "wintering place" (*kishlak*) is used for a settlement or "village." In Mongolia, however, many nomads gathered around rivers and lakes

The possibility of seizing neighbors' wealth was always a great temptation, and for many nomadic societies (as, indeed, for sedentary ones) predatory wars became an important supplement to their peacetime economy.

in the summertime, and large settlements of southwestern Turkmens also sprang up in the summer. As a rule, nomadic groups always returned to the same summer place, and their stay there was the longest of the year—from three to six months.

The established habits of migration could change rapidly when war or the threat of war forced the herders to leave their usual dwelling places. The necessity of closing ranks during a period of military danger could force the nomads to live together in large temporary settlements, even though this was very inconvenient for pasturing livestock. The political situation could also have a significant influence on the character of the economy. In the eighteenth and first half of the nineteenth century, when there were frequent wars and raids, the Kirghiz preferred raising horses to sheep and goats because horses were the most mobile form of livestock. After they were annexed to Russia in the last half of the nineteenth century, under a peaceful conditions sheep-raising became the chief occupation of the Kirghiz, and the number of cattle and camels they raised increased as well. Changes in the composition of the flock were also conditioned by curtailing of pasture and the demands of the market.

Although extensive livestock husbandry was the foundation of the nomads' economy, they were not averse to other occupations that could supplement their means of existence. Practically all the nomadic peoples at various stages of their history to some degree practiced supplementary agriculture, hunting, trade, and crafts. The possibility of seizing neighbors' wealth was always a great temptation, and for many nomadic societies (as, indeed, for sedentary ones) predatory wars became an important supplement to their peacetime economy. Often agriculture occupied an increasing role in their life of individual groups, and the period of agricultural work had to be taken into account as they organized their migrations with livestock. Their movements then depended not only on the character of the pasture: they had to return to their cultivated lands in time for the harvest.

Throughout history some nomads have taken up a sedentary way of life. It is often written that the nomads could not exist without economic ties to sedentary peoples. This is a controversial conclusion. Perhaps they could, but this cannot be proved, since the nomads have never lived in isolation. From time inmemorial the advantages of sedentary settlements as administrative, trade, and craft centers were clear to the nomads. Therefore the nomad environment included its own cities even in ancient times. For the most part these had been founded by a sedentary population and had later fallen into the possession of the nomads, for example, the medieval cities on the banks of the Syrdar'ya. But in some cases the nomads themselves built new cities, where craftsmen from as far away as China and France were brought together. Such cities originated, for example, during Chingis-khan's empire. It was the nomadic elite that needed these cities, and as soon as the administrative system maintained by military power force weakened, the cities were abandoned.

In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries nomadism was still practiced by large groups of peoples of the Russian empire: Kazakhs, Kirghiz, Turkmens, Buryats, Tuvinians, Azerbaijanis, Nogaians, and Bashkirs. But by this time nomadism was not an economic system based on extensive mobile animal husbandry. Instead, it had become a cultural identity stoutly maintained even among seminomadic and semisedentary peoples who had abandoned truly nomadic forms of animal husbandry.

Dr. Vladimir N. Basilov is organizer and Guest Curator of the exhibition, Nomads: Masters of the Eurasian Steppe, and editor of its catalogue, Nomads of Eurasia, *published by the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County. This article is adapted from the catalogue's introduction.*

Dr. Basilov received his degree in Anthropology in 1967 from the Miklouhko-Maclay Institute of Ethnography in Moscow. He has since held several positions, including Scientific Secretary and Senior Researcher, at the Institute, which is part of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR; he is currently head of the Institue's Department of Central Asian and Kazakhstan Research. Dr. Basilov has conducted extensive ethnographic field research in Central Asia and published more than 100 papers based on this work. He has written or edited several Russian-language books on the religious practices of the peoples of Central Asia, most recently The Ancient Cults, Beliefs, and Rituals in Central Asia *(Moscow, 1986).*

In 1969–70 archaeologists from the Kazakh Academy of Sciences found the so-called Golden Man during excavations at the Issyk burial site, not far from Alma-Ata. The remains of the corpse and the grave goods, buried in the fifth or fourth century B.C., were preserved in full. The large number of gold articles that decorated the body were preserved in their original position, making it possible for Soviet archaeologist K. A. Akishev to reconstruct the costume in which a young nobleman had been sent to the next world. From the collections of the Kazakh Institute of History, Archaeology, and Ethnography, Alma-Ata; photograph by Dana Levy and Joel Sackett.

TREASURES OF THE SCYTHIAN TOMBS

by Vladimir D. Kubarev

Translated by
Mary F. Zirin

Two and a half millennia ago the famous Greek historian and geographer Herodotus called the large population of martial Scythian tribes inhabiting the Great Steppe an "invincible and inaccessible" people. The "Father of History" devoted most of the fourth book of his nine-part *History* to a description of Scythia and its inhabitants. Archaeological investigations of their monuments continue to confirm Herodotus's important account of the economy, customs, culture, religion, and political history of the Scythians.

Who were these mysterious people who struck terror not only in their neighbors, but penetrated in their countless hordes into the powerful kingdoms of the ancient Near East up to the frontiers of Egypt? Known to the ancient Greeks as Scythians and to the Persians as Sakas, these tribes had their own names. The Scyths proper lived on the northern shores of the Black Sea between the Danube and the Don. The Sauromatae, who by repute spoke a dialect of the Scythian language, lived east of the Don on the northern Caucasian steppe and in the Volga region. The Sakian tribes occupied what is now Soviet Central Asia. Herodotus tells us that the Iyrcae lived beyond the Urals, the Argippaei farther east, and the Arimaspians dwelled around Lake Zaisan. The tribes inhabiting the Altai Mountain region were known to the Greeks by the legendary name of "griffins who guard gold" and to the Chinese as the *Yueh-chi*. The major population of the Yueh-chi lived in western Mongolia and perhaps also the Sayan Mountains.

All these tribes spoke North Iranian languages, were ethnically related, and led similar ways of life. Despite their prowess in war, the Scythian nomads' most important occupation was animal husbandry; they raised horses, sheep, oxen, and camels. This livestock was their basic wealth, and from it they obtained food products—meat and milk—and materials for clothing and domestic artifacts—hide, wool, horn, and bone.

The Scythian nomads had no fixed dwellings. The women and children lived in four-wheeled or larger six-wheeled wagons, while the men, busy pasturing and guarding their herds, spent most of their lives on horseback. The wagons, pulled by two or three pairs of hornless oxen, were divided into two or three interior sections and covered and walled with felt to protect the inhabitants from rain, snow, and wind.

From year to year the Scythians followed the same routes through the steppes looking for pasture for their livestock. Since it was easier for a large group to cope with the economic problems and vicissitudes of the harsh migratory way of life, the ancient nomads lived in large communities made up of all the patriarchal families belonging to individual clans. When external danger threatened, the nomads were quick to unite and repel the enemy onslaught. The major military historian of ancient Greece, Thucydides, wrote in the fifth century B.C. that "not only are the nations of Europe unable to compete, but even in Asia, nation against nation, there is none which can make a stand against the Scythians if they all act in concert."

The main strength of the Scythian army was the cavalry, whose most distinctive trait was the tireless and undemanding nature of its horses.

The Scythians clearly demonstrated their unanimity and invincibility in a war against the Persian King Darius, who commanded an army of 700,000 men and several hundred warships. Describing Darius's campaign against them, Herodotus noted that the "Scythian nation has made the most clever discovery among all the people we know... [for] no invader who comes against them can ever escape and... none can catch them if they do not wish to be caught. For this people has no cities or settled forts; they carry their houses with them and shoot with bows from horseback; they live off herds of cattle, not from tillage, and their dwellings are on their wagons. How then can they fail to be invincible and inaccessible for others?"

This is a headdress decoration from the Golden Man's costume. One of a pair of snow leopards with mountain peaks symbolizing ascent to heaven. The concentration of such symbols on the upper part of the garment is an ancient and widely practiced tradition; placement depends upon whether the spirit depicted resided in the upper or lower cosmic spheres.

The Scythians knew that they could not defeat the Persian host in open battle and carried on what was in essence partisan warfare, bleeding Darius's army with frequent attacks on small detached units and communications. Without losing a single battle, the Persians were forced to abandon the Scythian steppe; Darius had learned that he could never conquer such a mobile and resourceful opponent.

The main strength of the Scythian army was the cavalry, whose most distinctive trait was the tireless and undemanding nature of its horses. Riding them, the Scythians could move quickly

and cover great distances in a short time. They were never without their weapons: bows and arrows that they carried together in a special case called a *gorytus*, short iron swords *(akinakes)*, pole-axes, and spears. Ancient authors drew terrifying pictures of battle: an avalanche of Scythian cavalry attacking with a rain of deadly poisoned arrows and flying javelins threw the enemy into panic. The warriors used axes, daggers, and swords in the hand-to-hand combat that followed. This powerful onslaught was difficult to withstand, and even in retreat the Scythians continued to strike their foes by firing arrows backward over their shoulders as they galloped off.

Greek writers repeatedly stressed the Scythians' bellicosity and bravery and skill in battle. Many of their customs were connected with warfare. According to Herodotus, they drank the blood of the first enemy they killed and brought the heads of all those slain in battle to their king. The Scythians made drinking cups from their foes' skulls and attached the scalps to the bridles of their horses and used them as towels. They took "great pride" in these trophies.

A pair of winged horses. Scythian art is dominated by animal images distinguished by their kinetic character. Photograph by Dana Levy and Joel Sackett.

"The Scythians have no cities or settled forts; How then can they fail to be invincible and inaccessible for others?" (Herodotus, *The History*)

Depictions of the Scythians on the precious gold and silver vessels found in their burial mounds give us an idea of their appearance. The men had long hair and beards and wore pointed caps, short jackets, long trousers, and soft leather boots. The aristocracy decorated their garments by having little gold plaques sewn all over them.

The significant inequalities in property and social position that had developed in Scythian society by the sixth and fifth centuries B.C. are vividly reflected in their burials. *Kurgans*—earth or stone mounds stretching in long, sharply delineated rows against the horizon—are a distinctive feature of the Eurasian steppes. Some of them barely rise above the surrounding landscape, while others form conical hills 20 to 25 meters (65 to 85 feet) high and around 100 meters (325 feet) in diameter.

Common Scythians were buried in a simple earth pit along with a few weapons—bow and arrows, a spear, rarely a sword—and one or two ceramic dishes with food. Sometimes a horse was killed and placed in the grave with the corpse. The burials of Scythian kings were on a much grander scale. Their tombs were complex earth or stone structures over which all the members of the tribe or even several tribes erected huge kurgans as tall as modern five-story buildings. Despite pillaging, a large number of gold and silver objects, vessels, personal ornaments, weapons, bronze mirrors, cauldrons, and other articles have been found in many of these burials. Along with the king's remains, the kurgans often contain the skeletons of grooms, sword-bearers, concubines, and servants murdered to accompany him in his journey beyond the grave. Archaeological excavations of royal tombs are fresh confirmation that Herodotus' description of the burials of Scythian kings is authentic.

"When their king dies, they dig a great four-cornered pit, and, having made it ready, they take up the dead man... and put him on a wagon in which they carry him to another nation-.... When they have conveyed the corpse around to all the subject nations, they are... at the place of burial. Afterwards, when they put the dead man in his grave on a bed, they fix spears on either side of the corpse and stretch above them planks of wood and roof these in with plaited rushes; and in the open space that is left in the burial place they bury one of his concubines, after strangling her, and his wine-bearer, cook, groom, valet, and message-bearer. Also his horses, and the first fruits of everything else, and his golden cups.... Having done this, they rear a huge barrow of earth, showing the greatest zeal and rivalry with one another to make it as big as possible. When the year has come round in its course... of the king's remaining servants they take those most suitable for their purpose... and they strangle fifty of them and fifty of his most beautiful horses .... Each one of the fifty young men who were strangled they mount on a horse. They contrive the mounting of the horsemen by driving an upright stake along the spine.... They set

these, horses and riders, in a circle around the tomb, and, having done so, they ride off themselves."

Large numbers of sacrificed horses are found in many burials of Scythian aristocrats. In one kurgan alone, at Ul'skii Aul on the Kuban' River, over 400 horses were buried with the leader. Of course, they were only a small part of his enormous herd.

Among the burial vaults of Scythian leaders that have been explored by archaeologists, the Kelermes, Ul'skii Aul, and Elizavetinskaya kurgans; Karagodeuashkh near the Kuban'; the Solokha, Chertomlyk, Bol'shaya Tsimbalka, Krasnokutsk, and Aleksandropol' kurgans in the Dnepr region; and the Zolotoi and Talaevskii kurgans in the Crimean steppe are the most impressive in riches. Beautifully crafted objects, artistic masterpieces to rival any in the world, stand out among the abundant materials of these tombs. The most vivid expression of Scythian culture and the acme of its artistic creativity are the pieces created in the so-called Scythian wild-beast style. The nomads were unparalleled in the art of depicting animals. Figures of various wild beasts or images of their heads, horns, feet, eyes, and claws decorated many objects, but especially weapons and harness. These depictions of powerful and adroit beasts must have been intended to impart the same qualities to the mounted warrior and his steed and to protect them against misfortunes and evil.

Despite their prowess in war, the Scythian nomads' most important occupation was animal husbandry; their livestock was their basic wealth.

The origins of the Scytho-Siberian wild-beast style, like those of the Scythians themselves, are still mysterious in many respects. Some scholars think that the Scythians were the indigenous native population of the region north of the Black Sea, while others are just as convinced that they migrated into the area from the east. New discoveries by Soviet archaeologists in Central Asia and Turkestan support the latter theory. The excavations of the royal Arzhan kurgan in Tuva carried out over many years are particularly impressive. A stone mount 120 meters (394 feet) in diameter and four meters (13 feet) high covered a complex burial vault made out of huge ancient larch logs; 14 men and 155 steeds from 14 Tuvino-Altaian tribes were sacrificed to the dead king. Another 300 horses were killed during memorial rites. Incalculable treasures were buried with the king and his retainers. The kurgan was pillaged in ancient times, but even the materials that remain are striking in their magnificence. They include the world's largest bronze plaque in the form of a coiled snow leopard, finials shaped like mountain goats, two-colored fabrics, fragments of sable coats, turquoise beads and inlays for gold ornaments, a bronze battle axe and dagger with the figure of a wild boar on the hilt, a gold torque, and numerous little plaques, various arrows, and pieces of horse harness.

The Arzhan kurgan has been dated from the eighth to seventh centuries B.C., a few centuries earlier than the famous kurgans of the Black Sea region. Is it possible that the Scytho-Siberian wild-beast style originated locally in the eastern Eurasian steppes, independent of the Near East? This theory is confirmed to some extent by the discovery of a group of frozen kurgans of ancient Altaian aristocrats at the remote site called Pazyryk.

Altogether, there were more than 4,000 gold objects found in the Golden Man's grave, among them a plaque depicting an elk that decorated his dagger. The elk's torso is twisted, a characteristic of the early nomadic wild-animal style that conveys disquiet, impulsiveness, and tension. Photograph by Dana Levy and Joel Sackett.

The Pazyryk kurgans of the Altai are 2,500 years old. Historically important finds—wool felt carpets, silk fabrics of Chinese and western Asian origin, various fur garments, numerous wooden ornaments in the wild-beast style, and mummified bodies buried in trough-shaped sarcophagi—were all amazingly well preserved in the permafrost of their subterranean log-framed structures. Another sensational find at Pazyryk was a wooden chariot that could be taken apart for the nomads' frequent migrations across mountain passes; its separate pieces were bound together by thongs. With great difficulty restorers collected and reassembled the broken parts of the chariot, and it is now on exhibition in the Hermitage in Leningrad, along with other interesting artifacts from the frozen kurgans of the Altai.

Today Siberian archaeologists are engaged in investigating the sites left by ordinary nomads.

For the last twenty years a broadly based North Asian expedition from the Institute of History, Philology, and Philosophy of the Siberian Section of the USSR Academy of Sciences has systematically excavated nomadic kurgans (seventh to first centuries B.C.) in the southeast regions of the Altai on the frontiers of Mongolia and China. Hundreds of sites from different epochs have been explored. The most interesting of them are the stone kurgans in the mountain gorge of Ulandryk, where untouched burials of the colorful and original Pazyryk culture were found in massive larch-log structures; like those at Pazyryk itself they were filled with ancient ice. Under these special circumstances a wide variety of objects remained intact: wooden dishes, bronze daggers in wooden scabbards, battle axes with wooden hafts, pieces of composite bows and arrows, and textiles. The ornamented ceremonial headdresses that were a part of the burial costume are unique. Among the carved wooden images on the headdresses deer and horses predominate, and the set of cult objects also includes little wooden figures of other popular animals of the Altaian wild-beast style—a fantastic griffin and birds like the rooster, eagle, and vulture. The headdresses were also decorated with large numbers of little gold plaques shaped like rosettes or stylized bulls' heads. In a few instances the lower edge of the headdress was finished with frontal bands richly ornamented in gold, or with wooden diadems made to imitate them, on one of which was carved a depiction of deer facing each other while fantastic beasts attack them from behind. Magnificent wooden snow leopards served as endpieces for the torques that warriors wore around their necks. All these wild-beast figures were undoubtedly not merely ornamental but also represented traditional images of ancient Altaian mythology. They are a rich source of information on the religious beliefs of the ancient Asian nomads.

The discovery of elaborate and precious Scythian archaeological artifacts is destroying the stereotype of these peoples as barbarians, as destroyers of cultural values.

These finds furnish a key to the understanding of yet another unique site, the only "untouched" royal burial in Asia—the Issyk kurgan excavated by Kazakh archaeologists 50 kilometers (31 miles) from Alma-Ata—where a Sakian aristocrat was buried in a rectangular log chamber under an earth kurgan 60 meters (200 feet) in diameter and about six meters (20 feet) high. The young warrior lay on a cloak richly sewn with gold plaques beside the north wall with his head to the setting sun.

He wore a short jacket, tight red suede trousers tucked into high boots, and a complex belt decorated with laminated gold plaques bearing incised pictures of a horse-deer-griffin. The jacket and boots of this ceremonial costume were also covered with hundreds of gold plaques. An iron sword and dagger in scabbards covered with gold leaf and depicting wild beasts were attached to his belt. Around the dead man's neck was a triple-spiral torque with endpieces shaped like tigers' heads, and he wore two golden rings on his right hand. His tall conical cap is the most interesting and valuable find in the kurgan. Decorated with a large number of plaques and figures in the Scytho-Siberian wild-beast style, the headdress is striking in its complex symbolic composition.

The wealth of gold objects found in the Issyk burial (more than 4,000 of them) makes it impossible to enumerate them all, but their totality suggests the wealth of other kurgans that were pillaged in ancient times and throws new light on the history of Sakian culture. The Issyk animal images were undoubtedly closely connected with a mythology and magic that among the Sako-Scythians became subordinated to the ideology of the developing class structure of nomad society.

The Siberian archaeological discoveries are destroying the stereotypes of Scythians as barbarians, as destroyers of cultural values. This idea was identified with the European and Chinese concept of the universal chaos reigning beyond the nucleus of the civilized world. Recent investigations have clearly demonstrated the Scythians' achievements in the spiritual and material spheres. They demand the revision of traditional appraisals of the role of nomadic herders in the history of world culture. In the form of museum exhibitions Scythian gold artifacts continue to travel the world, always gaining new admirers and connoisseurs and creating admiration for the unique, matchless art of the ancient nomads of Asia.

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Another sensational early burial is the Pazyryk complex in the frozen steppes of the Altai region. These graves are 2,500 years old and contained such treasures as wool felt carpets, silk fabrics of Chinese and western Asian origin, fur garments, and mummified bodies. All were amazingly well preserved by permafrost in their subterranean log-frame structures. Among them was this griffin head sculpted in wood and embellished with leather ears. Photograph by Harold and Erica Van Pelt.

This fragment of a felt saddle cover from Pazyryk shows a galloping elk, an important example of the early Scythian-Siberian wild-animal style. Photograph by Harold and Erica Van Pelt.

Some of the objects in the ***Nomads*** *exhibition were discovered by Dr. Kubarev, including wooden artifacts from the Altai region. He is the author of three books, notably* The Ancient Stone Figures of Altai *(Novosibirsk, 1979).*

Translations from the Greek are from: Herodotus. The History. David Grene, trans. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987. Used with the permission of the University of Chicago Press. Thucydides. *History of the Peloponnesian War.* 4 vols. C. Foster Smith, trans. London: Heineman, 1919.

Pages of Central Asian History: From the Empire of the Steppes to the Empire of the Tsars

by Azade-Ayse Rorlich

In his introduction to his monumental study *The Empire of the Steppes* Renée Grousset argued that Central Asia, or Continental Asia, as he calls it, "may be regarded as the matrix of nations, *vagina gentium*, and as the Germania of Asia, destined in its *Völkerwanderungen* [migrations of peoples] to present ancient civilized empires with Sultans and Sons of Heaven."

The lands that represent the focus of Grousset's remarks include, among others, the Eurasian heartland of the Soviet Union stretching from the Caspian Sea in the west to the Sino-Soviet border in the east; from the borders with Afghanistan and Iran in the south to a line drawn between the Aral Sea, the Irtysh River, the Lake Balkhash basin, and the Kazakh steppes in the north. This area was known as Turkestan until 1924. Today it roughly corresponds to the territories of the Uzbek, Turkmen, Kirghiz, Tadzhik, and Kazakh republics. The people who inhabit this area, and the culture they created, however, defies the confinement of present-day administrative boundaries, for in Central Asia the destiny of people and land alike has been shaped by the tension between the steppe and oasis, nomad and farmer, warrior and scholar/poet.

Despite its turbulent past and more recent administrative fragmentation, Central Asia today exhibits a remarkable cultural unity. This unity has its roots in the early Middle Ages and rests on the twin pillars of ethnicity and religion. With the exception of the Tadzhiks, who are of Iranian descent, the majority of the people of the vast area at the heart of the Eurasian continent are of Turkic stock, and their history has been shaped by Islam since the seventh century A.D. Although grouped in separate territorial units drawn along ethnic lines, the peoples of the Kazakh, Uzbek, Kirghiz, and Turkmen republics have a keen awareness of belonging to a Turkic commonwealth and sharing its *Weltanschauung* (world view).

A fragment from a Turkic grave (fifth to seventh century A.D.). This head from a grave monument bears a Turkic runic inscription, which unfortunately has not yet been deciphered. Photograph by Dana Levy and Joel Sackett.

The earliest information regarding the political history of the Turkic tribes (in Chinese sources, the T'u-chüeh) dates to the sixth century when Bumin, their chief, ended the vassalage of the T'u-chüeh to the Mongol Juan-Juan people, assumed the title of kagan, and established the first Turkic kaganate. After Bumin's death in 552, the kaganate was divided between his son and brother who became the rulers of the eastern and western kaganates, respectively. The history of the Turkic kaganates of the early Middle Ages was marked by internal strife and external pressures and led to their ultimate demise in the middle of the eighth century.

Candid reflections upon the dangers of strife are contained in the oldest dated monument of Turkic literature, the elegy inscribed on the funerary stele of Prince Kül Tegin (d. 731), which lies about forty miles north of Karakorum (in what is today the Mongolian People's Republic) and was raised at the order of his brother, who ruled the second eastern Turkic kaganate between 716 and 734.

Merciless is the fire that consumes one's soul Deadly is the enemy that rises from among one's own.

(from* Manas, *the Kirghiz national epic)

The Kül Tegin stele is a historical document of the utmost importance because its author not only recounted the origins of the kaganate, the biographies of the kagans, and their heroic campaigns and relations with the Chinese, but because he also left on the tomb of Kül Tegin a testament for his people, a call for unity and attachment to the land of their ancestors: "Do not move. If you go to these places, O Turkic people, you will perish. If you stay in the land of Otukan and send caravans from there, your world will be great and you will have no misfortune. If you stay in the Otukan mountains, your eternal unity shall not be destroyed." This advice seems to have come too late and did little to prevent the fall of the political entities that the Turkic warriors of the steppe had built in the sixth century.

The political map of Central Asia between the fall of the Turkic kaganates in the eighth century and the Mongol conquest of the thirteenth century recorded a steady influx of Turkic tribes such as the Oghuz, Kypchaks, and the Seljuks and the rise and fall of kingdoms and dynasties such as those of the Tahirids, Samanids, Gaznevids, Khorezmshahs, Seljuks, and Karakhanids.

The Karakhanids: The First Muslim Turkic Dynasty in Central Asia. The Karakhanid Turks conquered the Samanid domains in the tenth century and established a dynasty that ruled over the lands of western and southwestern Kashgaria, the Ili, Chu, and Issyk Kul region, between the tenth and early thirteenth centuries. The Karakhanids initially developed a system of joint rule; the ruler of the western lands, with the seat at Taraz, bore the title of *ilek* and deferred to the *khan* or *kara-khan*, who ruled over the eastern lands from Karaordu. The first Karakhanid mentioned in

A Kazakh family, from a photograph taken in 1926–27.

Arab sources is Satuk Bughra-khan who, as ruler of Kashgaria, adopted Islam and thus was instrumental not only in the emergence of the first Muslim Turkic dynasty of Central Asia, but in the spread of Islam through the land of the Karakhanids.

By the eleventh century, internal strife and rivalries led to the division of the Karakhanid state into fiefs, which, although virtually independent, gravitated around two entities that had emerged after the conquest of the Samanid domains: the western khanate extending over most of western Fergana and the eastern khanate comprising eastern Fergana, Semirech'e, Kashgar, and Talas.

The Karakhanids of the western khanate who reigned in Bukhara and Samarkand became vassals of the Turkish Seljuk sultans who in the eleventh century forged an empire that extended from the Amudar'ya (Oxus) River to the Mediterranean.

The Karakhanids of the eastern khanate were briefly united under Harun Bughra-khan (d. 1102), but strife resumed following his death and in 1130 Kashgaria and the Issyk-Kul basin were conquered by the sinicized Mongol Khitans who established their control over the western khanate as well. The last representative of the Karakhanid line perished in 1212.

The physical extinction of the Karakhanid dynasty and the demise of the state it had forged did not affect the destiny of its most enduring legacy, Islam, which became an important component of the cultural landscape of the entire region. Equally untouched by the demise of the state were some of the cultural legacies of the Karakhanid state: the poem *Kutadgu-bilig* (Science of Happiness, published in 1069), the first monument of classical Turkic literature, and Mahmud Kashgari's *Diwan Lughat at-Turk* (1074), a dictionary of the Turkic languages. Both works testify to the cultural transformation of Central Asia after the arrival of successive Turkic tribes on its territory.

Yusuf, the author of *Kutadgu-bilig*, dedicated his poem to Harun Bughra Kara-khan of Kashgar. The Karakhanid state emerges in Yusuf's poem as an ideal state of the Islamic world. Yusuf conveys his didactic messages on the meaning of happiness through a series of allegorical figures personifying such abstractions as Justice, Happiness, Intelligence, and Contentment. Despite its didacticism, *Kutadgu-bilig* emerges as a valuable document of Karakhanid culture for, according to Yusuf himself, "it was written in the language of Bughra-khan." In addition, *Kutadgu-bilig* also offers a glimpse of the psychology and tradition of the Turkic tribes in the eleventh century. It is for this reason, perhaps, that the poem enjoyed a wide popularity from the time it was written and was treated as a fountain of wisdom long before the epithet "classic of Turkic literature" was bestowed upon it.

Yet another important cultural legacy of the Karakhanid state is the dictionary of Turkic languages, *Diwan Lughat at-Turk*. Little is known about the family background of Mahmud Kashgari, the author of *Diwan Lughat at-Turk*, but he is believed to have belonged to a noble family. He evidently traveled over all the territories inhabited by Turkic tribes and studied their languages, history, customs, and literatures. He also traveled to Baghdad, which at that time was the cultural center of the Islamic world; while in Baghdad, Kashgari worked on his dictionary, which he completed in 1074. He is the first known Turkologist and scholar of Arabic who studied the languages of Turkic peoples of his time. Kashgari's dictionary consists of vocabularies of various Turkic languages, names of tribes and clans, and is a remarkable anthology of folklore and folk literature.

The *Diwan* contains close to 300 samples of folk poetry as well as numerous proverbs. Among these of particular interest are the *dastans* (epic poems) recounting the heroic deeds of the Turkic tribes in Itil (Volga) country and those of Alp Er Tonga, the legendary hero of the Karakhanid period. No less important is the literature written in the vernacular that Kashgari included in his

A Kirghiz woman on horseback. Photograph from the 1950s.

dictionary, for it seems that he regarded it as a bridge between folk literature and classic literature.

The Mongol Conquest of Central Asia. The cultural ferment of the Karakhanid period came to an end with the demise of the dynasty in 1212, but even more so with the turmoil of the years between 1219 and 1221 when Central Asia was conquered by Chingis-khan's (Genghis Khan's) armies. Most of Central Asia (today's Uzbek, Tadzhik, and Kirghiz republics) became the *ulus* (patrimony) of Chingis's second son Chagatay; the rest (today's Kazakh republic) were included in the patrimony of Chingis's eldest son Dzhuchi, while others (today's Turkmen republic) in the *ulus* of Hülegü, Chingis-khan's grandson.

After Chingis-khan's death there was friction between the different branches of his empire and the centrifugal forces that pulled the individual states further away from central control led to the emergence of virtually independent entities.

Transoxiana (the region north of the Oxus River) was freed from the authority of the house of Chagatay by Timurlenk (Tamerlane), the son of a noble family belonging to the Turkic clan of Barlas. By the end of the 1380s, Timur brought under his rule all of Central Asia; conquered eastern Iran, Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Mesopotamia; and inflicted crushing defeats upon the Golden Horde, the Ottoman Turks, and the Turkic sultanate at Delhi. His rule (1370–1405) brought the Timurid dynasty into the political arena; its contributions to the history of Central Asia were not confined to political conquests. The Timurids, among whom Ulugh Beg (1405–49) is perhaps the most prominent, were responsible for the spectacular cultural renaissance of Central Asia, which became the true cradle of Islamic civilization and learning.

Ulugh Beg, Cultural Leader of the Timurid Dynasty. Ulugh Beg was born on March 22, 1394, the first child of Shah Rukh, Timurlenk's fourth son. He was named Muhammad Taraghay, but before reaching the age of 11 he was being referred to as "Ulugh Beg" or the Great Prince. At the age of ten Ulugh Beg married his second cousin Öge Begum; their wedding feast was part of the combined celebration of Timur's victorious return from a seven-year campaign and of the wedding of his five grandsons, aged nine to 17.

The future of the young couple was shaped by Timur's death the following year. To each son and grandson he bequeathed a fief. Ulugh Beg's father received Khorasan and distinguished himself as a brave soldier, a good leader, a devout if not ascetic Muslim, a great builder, a lover of poetry, and a protector of poets and artists. Shah Rukh was the most remarkable of the Timurids, and his reign (1407–47) was the catalyst for the golden age of Persian art and literature while Herat, his capital (now in Afghanistan), became the center of Timurid renaissance.

When Shah Rukh died in 1447, he was succeeded by Ulugh Beg, who had been governor of Transoxiana. Unlike his forebears, Ulugh Beg was not a successful general, and by the end of his reign in 1449 his realm had fallen prey to Moghul and Uzbek agressiveness and was torn by internal rivalries. He himself fell victim to these rivalries when he was murdered by his son in 1449.

Ulugh Beg may not have excelled in military undertakings, but himself a scholar, he emerged as a protector of science, learning, poetry, and the arts. He transformed Samarkand, the capital of his province, into a brilliant cultural center.

Of the religious foundations erected by Ulugh Beg, the *madrasas* (schools of higher learning) of Samarkand and Bukhara became centers of learned theology, while the *khanaqa* (monastery) that he built for dervishes, and endowed as generously as he en-

dowed the madrasas, provided a home for those who challenged official theology. His other building projects included mosques, public baths, renovations of the Timurid mausoleum, suburban palaces, and the three structures in the *Bagh-i-Maydan* (Garden of the Public Place): the pavilion *Chil-Sutun* (Forty Pillars), the library, and the observatory, which, according to his contemporaries, was a three-story building equal in height to the Santa Sophia Cathedral in Constantinople.

Illustrious philosophers and mathematicians were Ulugh Beg's teachers and advisers. The astronomical tables that Ulugh Beg completed in 1449 shortly before his death are perhaps the best evidence of his interest in science, as much as his *History of the Four Ulus* is the evidence of his search for continuity in recounting the breakup of the Mongol empire. Timur's grandson was not only the ruler who sparked the cultural rebirth of his domains, but was also a poet at heart and in his pursuit of war, glory, science, and beauty he was a Great Prince of renaissance of Muslim Asia.

The Russian Empire Moves East. At the beginning of the sixteenth century the Uzbeks, under Muhammed Sheibani, overthrew the last Timurid rulers of Samarkand and established a dynasty that ruled over the Uzbek khanate for almost a century. This khanate reached its zenith under Abdullah Khan (reigned 1583–98), whose death led to the emergence of a new dynasty: the Astrakhanids. Under them, the local power of the princes grew significantly in the seventeenth century, thus leading to the emergence of three rival khanates centered at Bukhara, Khiva, and Kokand. The three khanates all contributed to the emergence of a unique synthesis of Turkic-Arabo-Persian Islamic culture.

Throughout the centuries Central Asia's history has been shaped by the tensions between two patterns of life: nomadic and settled. In the nineteenth century both ways of life experienced the increasing pressures of the eastward push of the Russian empire. The three khanates eventually succumbed to the Russian armies because their rivalries and never-ending internecine strife, as well as their military inferiority, had rendered them virtually powerless.

A campaign that began in 1855 under the command of General Cherniaev led to the capture of Tashkent in 1865, followed by Samarkand and Bukhara in 1868, and the signing of a treaty that transformed the khanate of Bukhara into a Russian protectorate. The submission of Khiva came in 1873, when a treaty placed the khanate under Russian protectorate. Kokand fell in 1876, while the last strongholds of the Teke Turkmens and the Merv oasis completed the Russian conquest of the Transcaspian region, which had begun in 1864 with the founding of Krasnovodsk on the eastern shores of the Caspian.

With the exception of the protectorates of Khiva and Bukhara, the conquered lands were integrated into the administrative structure of the empire without delay. The conquest of the Syrdar'ya and the Semirech'e region led to the organization in 1867 of the General Governorship of Turkestan (with the administrative center at Tashkent), which was placed under a military administration responsible to the War Ministry.

By the time of its conquest of Central Asia, the Russian state had acquired three centuries of experience in dealing with a conquered Muslim population. Since the 1552 defeat of the khanate of Kazan (in the middle Volga) had led to the incorporation of the first non-Slavic and non-Christian population into the fabric of the Russian state, policies vis-à-vis conquered Muslims ranged from those aimed at conversion and Russification (in the middle Volga) to noninterference with religious life in Central Asia. Moreover, in an effort to prevent renewal from within, Russian ad-

Kazakhs in Semipalatinsk oblast, from early in the twentieth century. This photograph shows a typical yurt interior; note the latticework structure and the appliquéd felt textiles.

This drawing shows the armor, clothing, weapons, and horse trappings of an ancient Turk. Drawn by M. V. Gorelik.

ministrators encouraged scholasticism and religious conservatism not only in Central Asia, but also in the Kazakh steppes, which had been conquered earlier.

In the steppe region, a number of tribes (the future Kazakhs) that had emerged as a result of the biological assimilation between the Turkic tribes and the Mongols broke off from the declining Golden Horde in 1456 and formed three distinct hordes (dzhuz) occupying the territory of present-day Kazakhstan: Great (Ulu) in Semirech'e, Middle (Orta) in the Central Steppe region, and Little (Kishi) in the area between the Aral and the Caspian Seas. The energies of the hordes were spent as much in fighting each other as in responding to the challenges posed by intruders; *Manas,* the national epic of the Kazakhs praises the deeds of the heroes who rose to meet those challenges.

The incursions of the Kalmyks from Mongolia into the lands of the Kazakhs brought devastation and times of great misfortune; this prompted the khans of the three hordes to ask for Russian protectorate: the Little Horde in 1731, the Middle in 1740, and the Great in 1742. This represented the first step toward the outright incorporation of the hordes into the territory of the Russian state, which was accomplished in the first half of the nineteenth century. The khan of the Middle Horde was deposed in 1822, of the Little Horde in 1824, and the Great Horde in 1848. The Russian garrison established in Vernyi (Alma-Ata) in 1854, and the arrival of the first Russian settlers, were the most tangible testimonies of the dramatic change in the status of the steppes.

In 1812, a section of the Little Horde split off and under Bukey Khan emerged as the Inner Horde, which however, was abolished by the Russians in 1845. Thus, the conquered Kazakh lands were put under the jurisdiction of the Orenburg, Astrakhan, and Samara *guberniias*. The Kazakhs did not have the status of subjects of the empire. As "aliens" *(inorodtsy)* they were not liable to military service, retained a degree of self government, and continued to adhere to their traditional customary law.

Only a few decades after the annexation, however, the Russian government identified with concern the role that the Volga Tatar merchants, teachers, and mullahs were playing in acquainting the Kazakhs among whom they had settled with ideas of Turkic kinship and unity and Islamic brotherhood. In response, the Russian authorities devised a policy aimed at eliminating the danger of "Tatarization" while promoting Russification. The government plan included some measures barring Tatar teachers from Kazakh educational institutions while others provided the creation of Russo Kazakh schools.

Ironically, the first generation of Kazakhs, mainly belonging to the nobility, educated in these schools were to become the "Kazakh enlighteners" who would lay the foundations for the process of reform and renewal known as *jadidism*. By questioning the value of the unchallenged acceptance of tradition, educated Kazakhs such as Ch. Valikhanov (1835–65), I. Altynsarin (1841–89), and Abai Kunanbaev (1845–1904; see page 25) searched for answers in their quest for progress. Whatever their specific contributions, they all agreed on the importance of education.

Toward the end of the century jadid reformism was transformed from a purely cultural phenomenon to a movement that became increasingly interested in social reform and political change. The best illustration of the immense gap the Kazakhs had closed in "entering the twentieth century" was their political socialization. The Kazakhs sent four representatives to the First and Second Dumas, and when they finally joined the third Muslim Congress (1906), their delegate, Sh. Koshchegulov, was elected to the presidium. Most of the jadid reformers advocated using the best of what the West and Russia had to offer, working within the system to advance the progress of their people. Their position was challenged by the conservative clergy, who regarded jadidism as a heresy and betrayal of the values of Islam. The Russian authorities supported the conservatives, who were advocating isolationism, for such a stand posed no threat to their monopoly of power.

In Central Asia, as in the Kazakh steppes, the jadids and the conservatives confronted each other on the issue of schools, and the jadids ultimately prevailed due to the financial support they received from the wealthy commercial bourgeoisie, which welcomed new ideas conducive to enlightenment and progress.

The revolution of 1905–6 did not bring the Russians and the natives together. It remained a purely Russian phenomenon because the emergence of Russian political organizations had not affected in any fashion the lives of the Muslim communities. Neither the eclectic Revolutionary Group of Tashkent nor its counterparts in Ashkhabad, Samarkand, and other cities of Central Asia sought the support of or attracted the native population. The failure of the 1905–6 revolution identified, at least for the Social Democrats, a missed opportunity, and they began emphasizing the need to work among the native population. The Social Democrats never closed the gap and were certainly not bridge builders for, despite their radicalism, they exhibited an aloofness to the needs of the native population that was too reminded of the stand of the Tsarist administration.

The burning issue in Turkestan and Kazakhstan was the land issue, particularly the pressures and the serious economic and social crisis brought about by the arrival of Russian settlers. It was against the background of this simmering discontent that an imperial ukase of June 25, 1916, triggered a major revolt. The ukase called for a draft of the native population of Central Asia in 25 age categories, thus changing their draft-exempt status and triggering new suspicions about the intentions of the Russian government among the natives.

By the end of the year the revolt had been quelled, but thousands of Russian settlers, and as many Muslims, had been killed; entire Kirghiz villages had been burned, triggering a mass exodus of the Kirghiz to China. Thus, on the eve of the 1917 February revolution, clouds of animosity and distrust darkened the skies of Central Asia.

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In daylight—
you are my wings
At night—you
are my trusted
friend
In death—we'll
be one
In life—we are
one

(from one of the epics of the Altai Kazakhs, referring to the relationship between man and horse)

SUMMER

When summer in the mountains gains its peak,
When gaily blooming flowers begin to fade,
When nomads from the sunshine refuge seek
Beside a rapid river, in a glade,
Then in the grassy meadows here and there
The salutatory neighing can be heard
Of varicoloured stallion and mare.
Quiet, shoulder-deep in water stands the herd;
The grown-up horses wave their silky tails,
Lazily shooing off some irksome pest,
While frisky colts go folicking about
Upsetting elder horses, at their rest.
The geese fly honking through the cloudless skies,
The ducks skim noiselessly across the river,
The girls set up the felt-tents, slim and spry,
As coy and full of merriment as ever.
Returning from his flocks, pleased with his ride,
Again in the *aul*[1] appears the *bai*.[2]
His horse goes on with an unhurried stride,
He sits and smiles upon it, hat awry.
Surrounding the *saba*[3] in a close ring,
Sipping their heady beverage—kumys,
Old men sit by a *yurta*[4], gossiping
And chuckling at quips rarely amiss.
Incited by the servants comes a lad
To beg the cook, his mother, for some meat.
Beneath an awning, gay and richly clad.
The *bais* on gorgeous carpets take their seats.
And sip their tea, engaged in leisured talk.
One speaks, while others listen and admire
His eloquence and wit. Towards them walks
A bent old man bereft of strength and fire.
He shouts at shepherds not to raise the dust
Aiming to win the favour of the *bais*.
And yet in vain he raises such a fuss—
They sit and never even turn their eyes.
There, tucking up the hems of their *chapans*,[5]
Leisurely swaying in their saddles as they trot
From nightly grazing come the young *chabans*[6]
Whipping their lusty steeds god knows for what.
A long way off from the aul's last tents
With movement and excitement getting warm,
On horseback, too, the *bai's* son and his friends
Enjoy a falcon hunt. The bird's in splendid form
At one quick spurt such falcons catch and bring
Crashing to earth the great, unwieldy geese.
Meanwhile that bent old man, unlucky thing,
The toady that had nigh gone hoarse to please
The haughty *bais*, unnoticed, watches on,
And sighs for sorrow that his time is gone.

1886

Abai Kunanbaev (1845–1904) was a Kazakh poet and humanist, generally regarded as the founder of modern Kazakh national literature. He drew on Kazakhstan's strong oral tradition as well as classic Persian poetry, Turkic folktales, and contemporary European fiction and poetry (translating such Russian classics as Eugene Onegin*). Kunanbaev's lyrics and satires reflected the life of Kazakh society in his time; his influence continued in Kazakhstan into the twentieth century.*

Translated by Dorian Rottenberg (Used with permission of the translator and Raduga Publishers, Moscow)

1. *Aul*—camp.
2. *Bai*—poet.
3. *Saba*—leather bag with wine or other drink.
4. *Yurta*—felt tent with cylindric walls and hemispherical roof.
5. *Chapan*—men's top-coat, gown.
6. *Chaban*—herdsman.

KHUBILAI KHAN AND HIS DREAM OF A WORLD EMPIRE

by Morris Rossabi

Three granite tortoises are all that remain of the Mongol capital at Karakorum. Only palace and temple foundations, a group of stone statues, a few beacon towers, and fragments of porcelain from Khubilai Khan's summer capital, Shang-tu (the real Xanadu), survive. Few Mongol buildings or artifacts have been preserved. As a result, the accounts in the Chinese and Persian histories; the scattered descriptions in Russian, Korean, Arabic, and Armenian chronicles and texts; and the travel diaries of European missionaries and merchants, notably Marco Polo, give us our only clear picture of what the great Mongol empire was like. Yet the written descriptions yield valuable glimpses of Khubilai, his court, his policies, his construction projects, and the peoples he ruled.

Portrait of Khubilai Khan.
National Palace Museum, Taipei.

Early Life

Khubilai (1215–94) was born in a yurt in the stark steppelands of Mongolia, but died in an elaborate and ornate palace in Ta-tu (Beijing), the magnificent city he had built. In the intervening years, he and his fellow Mongols carved out perhaps the greatest empire in world history; it encompassed China, Korea, Central Asia, Persia, much of Russia, and parts of the Middle East and Southeast Asia. Yet Khubilai was not a renowned military commander or strategist. He was significant because he was the first of the Mongol nomads to attempt to rule rather than merely to plunder. Unlike his grandfather Chingis khan, the conqueror, he wanted to govern the territories and peoples that the Mongols had subjugated.

Many of Khubilai's farsighted views and policies reflected his mother's influence. Persian historian Rashīd al-Dīn wrote that Sorghaghtani Beki was "extremely intelligent and able and towered above all the women in the world." A Hebrew physician named Bar Hebraeus observed that "if I were to see among the race of women another woman like this, I should say that the race of women was far superior to that of men." Khubilai's mother was one of a long line of thirteenth-century Mongol women, including Chingis khan's mother and wife and Khubilai's wife, to play a vital political role. Like Eleanor of Aquitaine, who lived about fifty years earlier, Sorghaghtani reared four sons who became monarchs. Both women promoted their sons' careers and labored relentlessly until their sons were enthroned. Sorghaghtani's husband (and Chingis's son), a military hero in the Mongol campaigns in Central Asia and North China, died around 1231–32, permitting her to devote herself to the training and advancement of her sons.

Her views and actions reveal a desire to rule and to prepare her sons to govern. Receiving a domain in North China from her brother-in-law, the Great Khan Ögödei, she recognized that exploitation of the Chinese peasants and plunder of the region's resources were shortsighted and counterproductive policies. Tax revenues would be greater, she believed, if she fostered the native agrarian economy instead of imposing a Mongol style-pastoral economy. Although a fervent Nestorian Christian, she patronized and cultivated the support of Confucians, Buddhists, and Muslims throughout the Mongol lands. She also ingratiated herself with the nobility by providing gifts and by forging covert alliances. By such policies, she won over much of the Mongol elite and secured the title of Great Khan for her oldest son Möngke in 1251. She died in 1252, having shaped her sons' lives and the future of the Mongol empire.

Möngke, who was less sophisticated than Khubilai, was impressed by and relied upon his younger brother. Influenced by his mother, Khubilai had been determined to govern the small domain granted him by his uncle Ögödei and recognized that administration of this Chinese territory required skills that the Mongols lacked. He eventually gathered around him an

international corps of advisers, including Tibetan Buddhists, Chinese Confucians, Central Asian Muslims, and European Christians, and, as a result, his domains were well governed and prosperous. His success prompted Möngke to entrust him with additional assignments. In 1253, Khubilai mounted an expedition that, with little bloodshed, established Mongol control over the present Yünnan province in southwestern China. In 1258, he resolved a dispute between Taoist and Buddhist clerics that threatened to engulf North China. Finally, in 1259, he led one army in a three-pronged attack on southern China, which had still not been subjugated. Möngke died during this campaign, leading to a struggle for succession.

Khubilai on a hunt. From Livre des merveilles. *Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.*

Khubilai As Ruler

Khubilai became Great Khan in 1260 but continued to face opposition for much of his reign. His desire to be a universal ruler and his growing identification with his Chinese subjects alienated many conservative Mongols, who sought to preserve the traditional customs and practices of their nomadic heritage. His younger brother Arigh Böke, who represented the conservative Mongols, also claimed the throne in 1260, and four bloody years elapsed before Khubilai, with the tacit support of his brother Hülegü, the ruler of Persia, finally crushed this opposition. Within a few years, however, conservative Mongols found another champion in Khubilai's cousin Khaidu, who repeatedly attacked China from his base in Central Asia.

Attempting to win over these Mongols, Khubilai maintained some of the traditional pursuits. Accompanied by falconers, soldiers, and an enormous retinue, he hunted beasts and birds. Khubilai was carried by four elephants on which a wooden room covered with cloths of silk and gold was balanced. He also gave lavish banquets at which, according to Marco Polo, over 40,000 people could be fed. Lacquered bowls brimmed over with meat and rice, and fine gold pitchers overflowed with kumys, the fermented mare's milk savored by the Mongols. Enormous quantities of liquor were consumed, and the alcoholism that was so much a part of early Mongol history persisted into and was sanctioned during Khubilai's reign.

In a more telling indication of his efforts to dispel fears of his growing sinicization, Khubilai continued the military expansion of the empire. His most stunning victory was his 1279 conquest of Southern Sung China, a territory that had a population of over 50 million people and vast resources at its command. This engagement, which required more sophisticated planning and logistics than many earlier Mongol campaigns, bolstered his prestige among his own people. The Mongols needed to coordinate their infantry along with their naval forces, not to mention their supply lines, in a massive operation that lasted for at least a decade. Khubilai's smashing success over the Sung was the crowning military achievement of his reign, but he also conducted other campaigns by which he compelled Annam (northern Vietnam), Champa (southern Vietnam), Burma, and Cambodia to accept the nominal sovereignty of the Mongols.

Having deflected some criticism from Mongol traditionalists and having proven his military worth to them, he simultaneously began to govern his East Asian realm. With the help of Chinese advisers, he established a government that resembled the traditional Chinese ones and restored Confucian rituals and ceremonies. He did not, however, reinstitute the Chinese civil service examinations for recruiting officials because he wanted to employ non-Chinese as well. He also established a four-class system, with the Mongols and the Muslims at the apex and the northern and southern Chinese at the base. Yet Khubilai had his oldest son and designated successor tutored by Chinese Confucian scholars, adopted the Chinese name Yüan for

KUBLA KHAN

Khubilai and his wife Chabi on a cookout. From Livre des merveilles. *Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.*

In Xanadu did Kubla Khan
A stately pleasure-dome decree:
Where Alph, the sacred river, ran
Through caverns measureless to man
Down to a sunless sea.
So twice five miles of fertile ground
With walls and towers were girdled round:
And there were gardens bright with sinuous rills,
Where blossomed many an incense-bearing tree;
And here were forests ancient as the hills,
Enfolding sunny spots of greenery.

(First stanza of "Kubla Khan or, a Vision in a Dream; a Fragment," by Samuel Taylor Coleridge, 1797. Coleridge had taken an "anodyne" for a "slight indisposition" and dreamed the poem's text—"two to three hundred lines"—after falling asleep upon reading this sentence in *Purchas's Pilgrimage:* "Here the Khan Kubla commanded a palace to be built, and a stately garden thereunto." Upon awakening, said the author, he "instantly and eagerly wrote down the lines that are here preserved. At this moment he was unfortunately called out by a person on business from Porlock, and detained by him above an hour, and on his return to his room, found, to his no small surprise and mortification that... all the rest [of the poem] had passed away....")

his dynasty, and recruited and patronized Chinese scholars who regarded the "civilizing" of the nomads from the North as their mission.

His clearest signal to his Chinese subjects was his construction of capitals in Shang-tu and Ta-tu. Pastoral nomads, by definition, did not settle down or build towns and cities. Yet, even before he became Great Khan, Khubilai constructed Shang-tu in the cool plains of Inner Mongolia, which eventually became his haven in the summer. Xanadu, as Samuel Taylor Coleridge referred to Shang-tu, was indeed a "stately pleasure dome," with magnificent marble palaces surrounded by parks, streams, and pavilions; roaming the grounds were special breeds of white mares and cows whose milk, according to Marco Polo, "no one else in the world dares drink except only the Great Khan and his descendants."

Even more impressive was the construction of a capital within China in Ta-tu, based upon Chinese models. Though many of the architects and craftsmen were foreigners, the city was Chinese in conception and style, a clear indication of Khubilai's efforts to reach out and appeal to the traditional Chinese Confucian scholars. The city was laid out in symmetrical north-south and east-west axes, with wide avenues stretching in geometric patterns from the eleven gates that permitted entry into the city. The avenues were so broad that Marco tells us "horsemen [could] gallop nine abreast." At the center was a bell tower that rang out time, and on all sides were markets displaying wares from as far away as Samarkand, Baghdad, and Ryazan (central Russia) and pagodas and observatories showing Tibetan, Indian, and Persian influences. Ta-tu was a Chinese city, but Khubilai also wanted it to be a showcase for his concept of a universal empire.

Khubilai as Universal Ruler

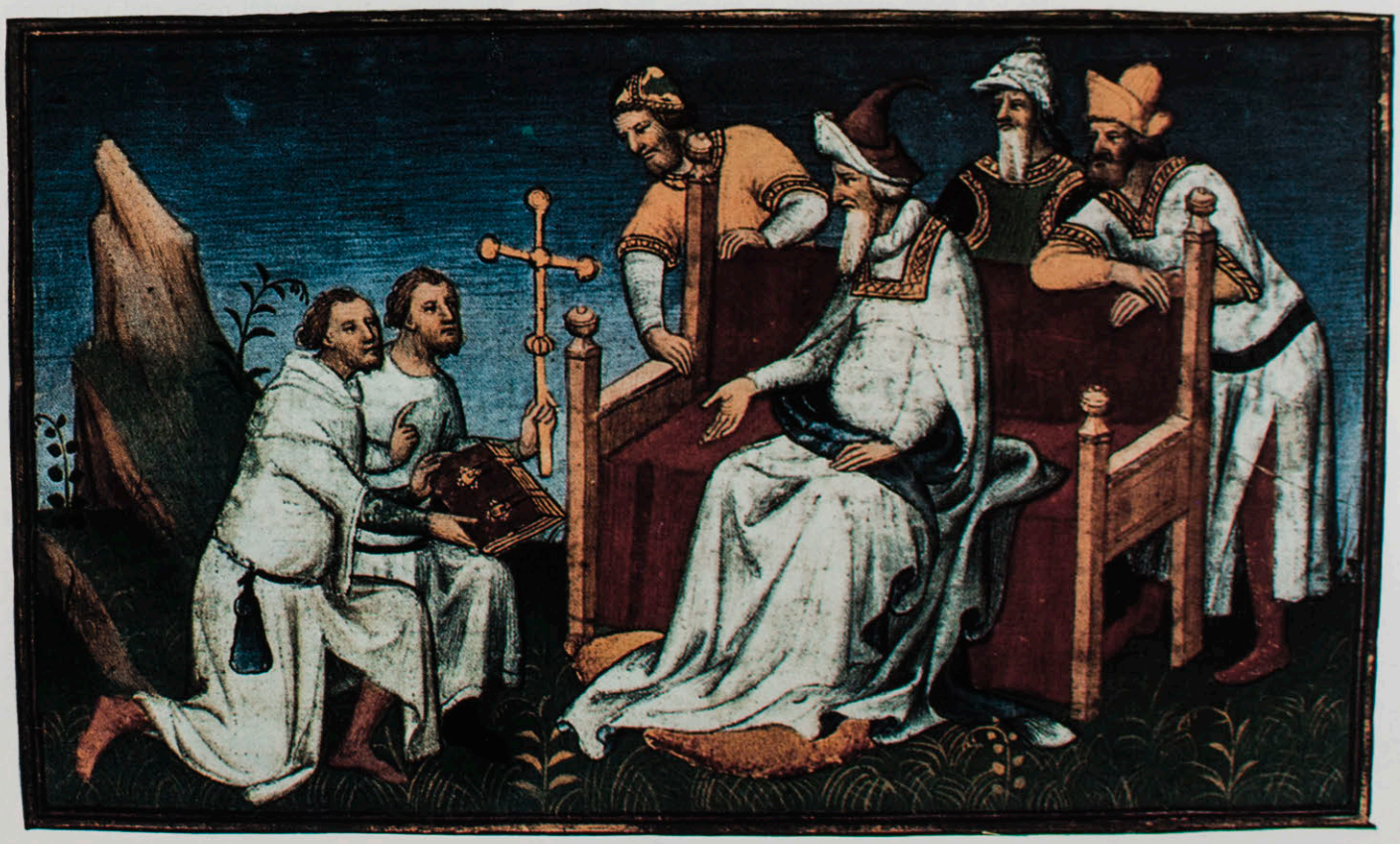
The size of these Mongol domains was staggering—almost 10,000 miles from east to west. The Mongols controlled some of the most populous cities in the world. Hang-chou, the capital of the old Southern Sung dynasty, had a population of about 2 to 2.5 million. By contrast, Marco Polo's Venice, one of the commercial centers of Europe, had only 100,000 inhabitants.

Khubilai was intent on maintaining contact and encouraging trade within the Mongol domains. To facilitate trade, the Mongols used

paper money extensively, and the Khan's seal on the notes guaranteed their acceptance throughout the realm. To promote commerce and to hasten the dispatch of important messages, Khubilai established postal stations 25 to 30 miles apart all over his territories. Each station had more than 300 horses, facilities for lodging, and food and supplies for official travelers and merchants. Messengers could, using the postal road system, travel 250 miles a day to deliver significant news, a remarkably efficient mail service for the thirteenth, or any other, century. Mongol domination had created a *Pax Mongolica* throughout Eurasia, permitting merchants, craftsmen, and envoys in unprecedented numbers to travel freely from as far as Venice to Ta-tu. Within China itself, Khubilai promoted trade by extending the Grand Canal to Ta-tu, which improved the transportation of food from the fertile regions of southern China to the arid capital.

He also tried to reinvigorate the Chinese economy. Before embarking on a planned and orderly program to do so, he needed to relieve the misery caused by warfare and natural catastrophes. He repeatedly waived or reduced taxes, provided grain to widows and orphans, and prohibited his officials and army from making exorbitant tax or corvée demands on the Chinese people. He was concerned with the welfare of his Chinese subjects and with the economic rehabilitation of the territory that he hoped to rule. Instead of expropriating land from the peasants, he established a government agency to promote agriculture and devised a fixed and regular rather than capricious and irregular system of taxation. Artisans, merchants, physicians, and scientists, who had been accorded a lowly status in Chinese society, were granted special privileges and exemptions and generally fared better under Khubilai than under the Chinese emperors.

His contact with other civilizations also enriched Chinese culture. He invited Persian astronomers to introduce their advanced theories and instruments to the Chinese. Persian astronomer Jāmal al-Dīn not only brought sundials, an astrolabe, a terrestrial globe, and a celestial globe, but also constructed an observatory, one of the few Yüan dynasty buildings to survive to the present day. Muslim physicians treated the court and its officials, and thirty-six volumes of Persian medicinal recipes were placed in the imperial library. The 'Phags-pa



Khubilai greeting the Polo brothers. From Livre des merveilles. *Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris*

lama, a Tibetan Buddhist monk patronized by Khubilai, developed a new written script for use throughout the empire and meant to unify the realm, but Khubilai did not realize that an officially devised and sanctioned written language, imposed from above, would encounter stiff opposition from his people.

He was more successful in gaining the allegiance of the various religious leaders in his realm. Like his mother, he patronized and attempted to appeal to disparate groups within his domains, and his success may be gauged in the writings sponsored by the different religions. The Buddhists thought of him as Manjusri, the Boddhisattva and embodiment of wisdom. Islamic historians depicted him as a patron of the Muslims. Confucians portrayed him as an ideal ruler because he employed scholar-officials in government, made the Chinese classics available, and by means of Chinese civilization "pacified" the "barbarians." Marco Polo implied that Khubilai was about to convert to Christianity. These differing images demonstrate his ability to ingratiate himself to disparate groups who each believed itself favored by the Great Khan.

His patronage extended beyond a variety of religions to include Chinese culture as a whole. He contributed to an environment that fostered theater, and the Yüan drama blossomed during his reign. He provided lucrative governmental positions to the great painter Chao Meng-fu and other artists, permitting them the time and resources to paint. His support for architecture included the construction of two capitals and the accompanying palaces, temples, and pavilions designed by native and Muslim, Nepalese, and Tibetan architects. Beautiful Buddhist stone sculpture at Fei-lai-feng in Hang-chou, white porcelains and later the renowned blue-and-whites, and colorful robes and vestments were all encouraged and, on occasion, subsidized by the court.

Khubilai's second wife Chabi supported him in his efforts to govern. She aspired to be the empress of a powerful state, not merely the wife of a tribal chieftain. When some Mongol nobles suggested that large tracts of land near the capital be converted to pasture, she objected and persuaded Khubilai to protect the interests of the Chinese peasants. She also convinced her husband to treat the captured members of the Southern Sung imperial family generously, which ingratiated the Mongol rulers to many Sung loyalists. An ardent Buddhist and a patron of the Tibetan 'Phags-pa lama, she encouraged Khubilai to support the Buddhist clergy and monasteries. More prosaically, she told court ladies to collect string from old bows and make them into thread, and she designed a hat that protected Mongols from the blazing desert sun. In short, she was an ideal spouse for the man who, she believed, would invite comparisons with the most illustrious rulers in East Asian history.

Left: Mongols in battle. Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.

Decline of a Universal Ruler

Her dreams and his aspirations foundered in the last decade or so of Khubilai's reign. His military campaigns, construction projects, and cultural patronage all required vast expenditures, and he employed foreigners to raise the needed funds. Non-Chinese, in particular Muslims, took charge of the financial administration of the empire, and their policies were regarded by the Chinese as exploitative and oppressive. Eventually, they turned to a disastrous inflation of the paper currency to meet the fiscal demands of Khubilai and the Mongol court. At the same time, conflicts, and even pitched battles, resurfaced between Buddhists and Taoists in the 1280s, and in the same decade, Khubilai supported policies that discriminated against the Muslims.

His naval campaigns were even more disastrous. Insulted by Japan's unwillingness to offer tribute, Khubilai launched assaults in 1274 and 1281. On the 1281 campaign, he mobilized a force of about 140,000 troops and a sizable armada to transport them across the seas. As the ships approached the island of Kyushu, a typhoon struck, and about one-half of the soldiers perished, compelling the survivors to return to the mainland. To the Japanese, the typhoon was no accident. It was a divine wind (or, in Japanese, *kamikaze)* sent by the gods to protect Japan. The second campaign was prompted by the refusal of the king of Java to submit to the Mongols. In 1292, Khubilai dispatched a 20,000-man army and 1,000 boats to compel the submission of Java, but the heat, tropical diseases, and guerrilla warfare, which the Mongol troops had scarcely experienced elsewhere, wore them down and forced them to withdraw from the island.

These years also witnessed personal frustrations and grief for Khubilai. Chabi died in 1281, leaving him wretched and alone, and his beloved son and designated successor, Chen-chin, succumbed in 1285. Many of his old advisors and comrades-in-arms died during this same period. Such personal sorrows, as well as the unraveling of his foreign and domestic policies, led him to turn more and more to food and drink for comfort. He became grotesquely obese and suffered from gout and other ailments. Like earlier Mongol khans, he became increasingly dependent on alcohol. By early 1294, he was extremely dispirited, depressed, and disillusioned. He even spurned those who traditionally offered New Year greetings to the ruler. On February 18, in his eightieth year, he died quietly in his palace. Within a few days, a caravan accompanied his body to the Kentei Mountains for burial. The tomb for one of the greatest figures in Asian, not to say world, history has still not been discovered.

Khubilai's dream of a well-governed and unified empire composed of numerous nationalities and religions was not realized, yet he had splendid accomplishments to his credit. He sought to govern, not simply exploit, the largest and most populous empire in the history of the world until that time. With a vision unique for one with a nomadic heritage, he tried to protect and promote the interests of his diverse subjects in a time when such consideration was rare. He attempted to unify the lands in Asia under Mongol hegemony. His failure was a noble one, and his glory remains untarnished.

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Khubilai's astronomical observatory in Beijing. Photograph E. C. Krupp, Griffith Observatory.

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DEVELOPMENT NEWS

Capital Campaign: Major Funding. As the Natural History Museum nears the conclusion of its $24 million Seventy-fifth Anniversary Capital Campaign, we salute new major gifts to the Ralph W. Schreiber Hall of Birds and the Times Mirror Hall of Native American Cultures: Mr. and Mrs. Robert E. Petersen, Petersen Publishing Company; Thomas and Elizabeth Plott; Mr. and Mrs. Neal H. Brockmeyer; and Anonymous.

In addition, the museum gratefully acknowledges gifts from: Mr. and Mrs. Robert V. Adams, The Albertson Foundation, Anonymous (2), Mr. and Mrs. Robert S. Attiyeh, Chandis Securities Company, Mr. and Mrs. George V. Caldwell, Mrs. Justin Dart, Mr. and Mrs. John L. Ernst, Dr. Janet Fireman, First Interstate Bank Foundation, The J. Paul Getty Trust, David and Lauren Green, Betty G. Irvin, Mr. and Mrs. Marshall I. Kass, The Tom and Valley Knudsen Foundaton, The George Konheim Family Foundation, Mr. and Mrs. Ernest Lever, Mr. and Mrs. John L. Meek, Andrea Morse, R. Michael Murray, Jr., Dr. and Mrs. Theodore B. Okie, Occidental Petroleum Charitable Foundation, Inc., Mr. and Mrs. Stephen R. Onderdonk, Ms. Susan F. Rice, Mr. and Mrs. Sheldon Richman, Mr. and Mrs. Marc Seidner, Mr. and Mrs. Robert Sibert, Mr. and Mrs. Mynatt Smith, Mr. and Mrs. Russell Dymock Smith, Times Mirror Foundation, Valley Hospital Medical Center, Mr. and Mrs. Richard S. Volpert, Robert P. Rosenberg, Wells Fargo Bank, Young's Market Company, and The Honorable and Mrs. Evelle J. Younger.

Dinosaur Ball '89: Ice Age Meets Age of Reptiles. On April 15, 1989, the Dinosaur Ball will be held for the first time at the George C. Page Museum of La Brea Discoveries. This year one of the Southland's most glamourous traditions celebrates its sixth season.

The Dinosaur Ball, targeted to raise $300,000 for the museum's exhibition and education program, is subtitled "A salute to the children and families who discover our world through two great museums." Special "Discovery" sponsors will be honored for their contributions of $25,000 or more to the Ball. The museum is pleased to recognize Mr. and Mrs. Roy Nutt as the first couple to make this leadership commitment.

The Page Museum provides an unusual setting for the Ball. Guests will socialize over cocktails in the stylish, semicircular museum, relax in its central atrium, and marvel at skeletons of the magnificent Ice Age mammals that once roamed the Los Angeles Basin. Dining and dancing complete the enchanted evening. Advance reservations are available. For information, call 213/744-3307.

Exhibition Underwriting. The museum's changing exhibition program has grown tremendously, thanks to generous underwriters and a dedicated curatorial staff. Major underwriting has been announced by two government agencies.

The National Endowment for the Humanities has awarded $225,000 to the museum to fund **Nomads: Masters of the Eurasian Steppe.** The exhibition, currently on display in the museum's Governors Gallery and the Olympics Gallery, is featured in this issue of TERRA. Information on the significance of this important exhibition is included in the foreword by Dr. Craig C. Black and other articles.

The National Science Foundation has awarded $305,307 to the museum to organize a major exhibition on sharks. After its Los Angeles debut in June 1990, **Sharks: Fact and Fantasy** will travel to the Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.; the American Museum of Natural History, New York; and the Bishop Museum in Hawaii, among 15 museums nationwide.

Natural History Museum Director Dr. Craig C. Black, George Lucas, and JCPenney Chief David Miller were part of a star-studded "celebration of dinosaurs" at the museum. Following the Los Angeles premiere of the Lucas/Spielberg animated film Land Before Time, *guests enjoyed the grand opening of the museum's Kokoro Dinosaur exhibition. JCPenney sponsored the exhibition and the party, with screening courtesy of Universal Pictures and Amblin Entertainment. Photograph © 1988 Michael Jacobs Photojournalism.*

Specific traveling exhibitions have been made possible by a variety of significant gifts:

Kokoro Dinosaurs
(Opened November, 1988) JCPenney; Larry Belling/Belling Productions Inc./Slippery Studios, for recording public service announcements; Eddie Albert, for narrating public service announcements; N. W. Ayer, for advertising sevices

Nomads: Masters of the Eurasian Steppe
(Opened February, 1989) Occidental Petroleum Corporation, National Endowment for the Humanities, California Council for the Humanities (a state affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities), the Milken Family Foundation, University of Washington Press, Omar Sharif, Greneker/Wolf & Vine, May Company, Max Baril, Sally and Paul Maslansky

First Egyptians
(Opens April, 1989) Bruce and Carolyn Ludwig, Royal Athena Gallery, Egypt Air, University of South Carolina

The Disappearing Wildlife of California
(Opens June 1989) Organized by the California Nature Conservancy, Coast Savings and Loan

Nomads: Masters of the Eurasian Steppe—An Exhibition from the Great Museums of the U.S.S.R.

The Natural History Museum is proud to present **Nomads: Masters of the Eurasian Steppe** in cooperation with the Academy of Sciences, U.S.S.R. The exhibition opens February 4 and runs through April 16, 1989. The exhibition hours are 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., Tuesday through Sunday, closed Mondays (the museum will be open Presidents' Day, Monday, February 20, and Monday, March 20).

As a member of the Natural History Museum, you are entitled to two free tickets to this spectacular exhibition. To receive your tickets, mail in the ticket envelope from the January/February 1989 issue of TERRA to Ticketmaster or call 213/744-6292.

Additional tickets to **Nomads** are available from the museum's special exhibition ticket counter at the south entrance or from Ticketmaster at $5 for adults, $3 for students and seniors (62 and over), and $1 for children (5–12). Children under 5 are free. There are no service or handling fees for tickets purchased at the museum. Ticketmaster charges an additional $1 handling fee for tickets by mail and $1 service fee for each ticket purchased. Tickets may be purchased from Ticketmaster outlets at May Company, Sportsmart, and Music Plus or by calling 213/480-3232, 714/740-2000, 619/232-0800, or 805/583-8700.

The Natural History Museum's Education Division is planning special events, lectures, gallery tours, classes, field trips, and children's programs in conjunction with Nomads: Masters of the Eurasian Steppe. Please see the February/March TERRA CALENDAR for details.

Court Arts of Indonesia (Opens 1991) Texaco Philanthropic Foundation, Inc.

TRW Sponsors American Indian Festival and Market. TRW became the first corporate sponsor of the museum's seventeenth annual Indian Festival and Market which showcases contemporary American Indian art and the diverse cultural heritage of all Native Americans. Annual festivities include artisans presenting their work, films, dance performances, children's activities, and traditional Indian fry bread. TRW also provided a 27-minute video, *Taking Tradition to Tomorrow,* that shows Indians in various careers as role models for young Native Americans.

Ralph M. Parsons Foundation Underwrites Permanent Insect Exhibit. The Ralph M. Parsons Foundation has approved a grant of $465,819 to fund construction and first-year operation of an innovative new insect gallery to be permanently installed as part of the museum's Ralph M. Parsons Discovery Center. **Through the Insect Realm** features an insect zoo, an interactive computer display, preserved specimens, photographs, videos and models and will explore the amazing diversity of insects and related animals.

Highlights include poster-size color photographs of a wide variety of insects; an insect zoo of nearly forty species of local and exotic insects and terrestrial arthropods such as crabs and scopions; a display illustrating the impact of insects on art, history, and other aspects of human culture; and an interactive computer station that answers common questions about insects and how to identify them.

Although the Natural History Museum houses over 5 million insect specimens—including the world's largest collection of southwestern moths and butterflies and North American's largest collection of ants—it has not had a permanent insect display since 1984, when the Insect Hall was dismantled for museum-wide renovation.

Through the Insect Realm will feature one of only four major insect zoos in the country. Live insects being considered for the insect zoo include giant tropical millipedes, grasshoppers, giant water bugs, tiger beetles, walking sticks, and colonies of harvester ants and honey bees, among others.

The Parsons Foundation's gift will complete the Discovery Center, which opened to the public in April 1987, thanks to the Foundation's original gift of $250,000. The center is designed to provide children of all ages with the opportunity to explore the natural world through paticipatory learning experiences. These include making crayon rubbings of fossils embedded in a realistic-looking rock wall; perceiving drops of pond water through a microscope; trying on costumes from around the world; and observing fish and other live animals in aquariums and terrariums. An estimated 500,000 children visit the Natural History Museum and the Discovery Center each year.

New Fellows. The Museum welcomes the following Fellows: Mr. and Jrs. James Acret, Jeffrey and Rosalie Bacon, Max Factor III, Justice and Mrs. Robert Feinerman, Milton Glaser, George Gradow and Barbi Benton, Judge Cynthia Holcomb Hall, Elizabeth and Gerald Jennings, Mrs. Willard J. Lewis, Loren and Deloris MacKinney, Dr. Janet Magdovitz, Lois and John Nickols, Carl W. and Susan W. Robertson, Shauna E. Sorenson, Ed and Dorothy Stotsenberg, Paul J. and Robert E. Weiss, and Thomas M. Wilkinson.

Business Associates. The Museum welcomes the following Business Associates:
The Aerospace Corporation
Chiat/Day Inc. Advertising
Goldman Sachs and Co.
United Answering Service, Inc.
United Business Interiors

For further information about the benefits of becoming Fellows and Business Associates, contact Susan McCarthy, 213/744-3307.

Among the gems donated to the museum by John Jago Trelawney are (clockwise from top) Malaya garnet, chrome tourmaline, scapolite, Tsavorite garnet, Tanzanite, and (center) scapolite. All the gems were mined in East Africa. Photograph by Harold and Erica Van Pelt.

The Gem & Mineral Council Is Batting 1000... Make that 15,000. By every measure the museum's Gem & Mineral Council has been a rousing success. The council was formed in 1985 to help support the activities of the museum's Mineralogy Section and to provide a program of gem and mineral related activities to its members. In the short time since the council's inception, its membership has grown to 165 and it has raised nearly $60,000.

The latest success was the council's first benefit auction which netted more than $15,000. The auction, held on December 11, 1988, was graciously hosted by Wayne and Dona Leicht in their beautiful Laguna Beach home. Sixty-five items, donated mostly by Los Angeles-area gem and mineral dealers, were auctioned to an audience of about 140. Noted author and lecturer, Dr. John Sinkankas, presiding as guest auctioneer, lent his very special wit and style to the occasion and the museum's Curator of Gems and Minerals, Dr. Anthony Kampf, pitched in relief. The consensus was clear—every one had a great time and all were anxious for another auction next year. Annual membership dues for the Gem & Mineral Council are $100 for two persons. This price includes all the benefits of membership in the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County as well. Call 213 744-3327 for more information.

NEW ACQUISITION

Mineralogy Receives Major Gem Donation. Thanks to Mr. John Jago Trelawney of Palo Alto, California, his recent significant gift of gems now places the museum's relatively young gem collection among the country's foremost collections. Mr. Trelawney donated 180 pieces of exceptional quality and variety—the largest non-cash donation to the museum in more than a decade. According to Dr. Anthony Kampf, curator of the Museum's gem and mineral collections, "Mr. Trelawney's excellent taste in gems, keen peception and ability to make the right contacts in the gem marketplace have allowed him to amass a remarkably fine collection in a relatively short time [9 years]." His collection is especially noteworthy for its wide variety of rare and unusual gems. One of the best examples is a 28.41-carat, blue-violet tanzanite of superb quality. Many of this collection's finest gemstones are now on view in the museum's E. Stuart Hadley, Jr., Hall of Gems and Minerals.

OUTREACH

The Museum Reaches Out to Special Education Students. The Special Education Outreach Program, one of the Education Division's three programs designed to reach those who cannot easily visit the museum, received a generous gift earlier this year from National Medical Enterprises, Inc (NME). The award, a $25,000 grant, was given for the ongoing maintenance, refurbishment, and development of materials for this program.

Special Education Outreach was modeled after a similarly successful program developed at the Carnegie Institute in Pittsburgh. Designed for students with physical, mental, or emotional handicaps, the program has traveled to classrooms such as those at the Pacific Boulevard Special Education Center in Huntington Park and visited students, many of whom are multi-handicapped.

This hands-on program reaches these students, even the most severely disabled, through stimulating use of such items as taxidermied specimens, pelts, shells, bones, antlers, models, and illustrations on such topics as dinosaurs, North American mammals, and life in the ocean. Very special docents, who have been trained to work with disabled students, drive the program's fully equipped van to sites throughout the county. The hour-long program is presented by a team of docents, and teachers are left with educational materials and extension activities for use in their classroom. Many times classes that have been visited by the Special Education Outreach Program's docents come to the museum for a study tour.

National Medical Enterprise's support has enabled the Education Division to continue reaching Los Angeles County's population of very special students with memorable and exciting museum education programs.

José, a student at Pacific Boulevard Special Education Center in Huntington Park, enjoys looking at and touching a taxidermied lynx during a Special Education Outreach presentation at his school. Photograph by Dick Meier.

LETTER

Mystery Alligator Farm Child Identified

In the September/October 1988 issue of TERRA you featured in "Focus on the West" a picture taken at the California Alligator Farm.

My grandfather and grandmother, Frank and Gladys Demars Earnest, founded the California Alligator Farm in 1906. My grandfather traveled to Lousiana and Mississippi to capture alligators to stock the farm.

The child in the picture is a little girl. Her name was Doreen Earnest. She was my grandparents' first child. She died at the age of five from complications of diphtheria and scarlet fever. My mother was their second child, born after Doreen's death.

I grew up on the alligator farm, as did my mother. My father worked as a guide on the farm. The alligator farm was a major tourist attraction, especially in the 1920s and 1930s. It was located on Mission Road, directly across the street from Lincoln Park, which was popular for its boathouse and merry-go-round. My grandparents also maintained a large ostrich farm on the same property, which occupied a city block.

After the death of my grandfather, my grandmother continued to manage the farm with the help of her two children, Marjorie and Frank, Jr.

Upon her death both farms were closed and the property sold. Frank moved the Alligator Farm to Buena Park, where it operated as a tourist attracton until just a few years ago.

I have enclosed a picture of myself (taken at the age of two) riding on Pontchartrain Billy. My grandfather captured Billy at Lake Pontchartrain in Louisiana. Billy *was* the star of the Alligator Farm; he was extremely docile, allowing tourists to sit on his back to have their pictures taken.

Incidentally, all the handbags and men's wallets that were made from alligator skin (as well as the full line of ostrich-skin accessories) and sold at the farm were purchased from outside sources. None of these items was ever manufactured from skins of alligators or ostriches living on the farm.

Thank you so much for publishing this wonderful picture! It brought back many exciting and pleasant memories for me.

Sincerely,
Marjorie L. Eade

Q: I have a military medal, but a friend told me it was actually a decoration. What's the difference?

A: According to History Curator Don Chaput, the distinction between the two is fuzzy. There are all sorts of medals for military, religious, political, and other activities. In military use, the word "medal" usually refers to a specific campaign, and those medals are awarded to all those who were present during a certain engagement, occupation, or activity. Some United States campaign medals are: Philippine Campaign (1899), Yangtze Service (1926–32), Asia-Pacific Campaign (World War II), Antarctica Service (after 1946).

A decoration is awarded to an individual for an outstanding act or service, and the recipient's name is usually inscribed on the reverse of the decoration along with date of significance and name of unit if appropriate.

For total confusion, now, let's consider the Medal of Honor, the highest ranking of the U.S. decorations. This is awarded in the name of Congress and is often personally presented by the President to the recipient or next of kin.

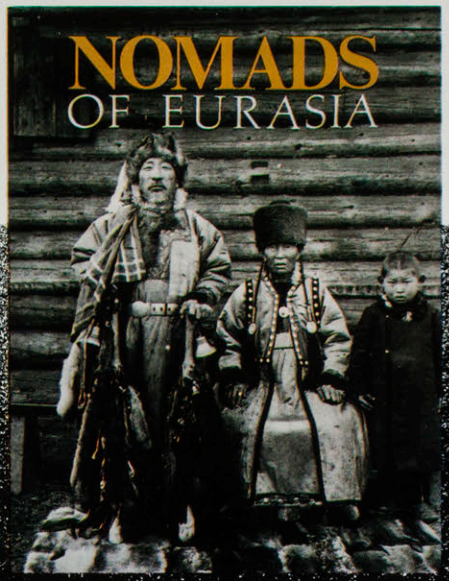
The decoration shown here is an Army Medal of Honor awarded to Private First Class David M. Gonzales for giving his life to save fellow soldiers during a campaign in the Philippines in 1945. Gonzales, a native of Pacoima, California, was the only Los Angeles-area man in World War II to receive this high distinction. (TERRA will have an article on his unusual career in a future issue.)

To sum up: a medal is usually for *being* somewhere, whereas a decoration is awarded to an individual for a specific reason. It doesn't help that our highest decoration is referred to as a "medal." In general, though, throughout the world the definitions of medal and decoration just outlined tend to be valid.

The Medal of Honor is the highest ranking of the United States' decorations. This decoration was awarded to the only Los Angeles-area man in World War II to receive this high distinction. Photograph by Don Meyer.

NOMADS OF EURASIA

The 3000-year history of the nomadic peoples of the Eurasian Steppes



In conjunction with the premier showing of NOMADS: MASTERS OF THE EURASIAN STEPPE, the Museum Store offers a dramatic 208-page exhibition catalog. *Nomads of Eurasia* includes both 99 color plates and 128 black and white illustrations of the artifacts from eight major museums of the U.S.S.R. on display in the exhibition: golden ornaments; armor and weapons; textiles and clothing; domestic utensils; jewelry; musical instruments; and religious and ceremonial articles. These images and the ten accompanying essays by prominent Soviet scholars depict the splendor and riches of the nomadic peoples by describing life along the Silk Road, the name given to the caravan roads and trade routes that virtually linked the east and the west from prehistory to the Middle Ages. Along this route flowed not only precious commodities, but also ideas about science, religion, art, and technology.

SPECIAL MUSEUM STORE

The catalog, as well as an exhibition poster and a selection of textiles, jewelry, and related merchandise is available in a special Museum Store located at the end of the exhibition.

For more information, or to order your catalog by telephone, call *(213) 744-3434.*

Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County
900 Exposition Boulevard, Los Angeles, CA 90007